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SHORT STORIES

No. 660.] For the Week Ending August 24th, 1901. [One Penny.

With a quick gesture he threw off his hat, cloak, and false hair.

(See "Adventures of an Actress.")

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THE ADVENTURES OF AN ACTRESS.

III.—Twice Foiled.

By DONOVAN MART.

CHAPTER I.

MARK DANVERS, theatrical agent, was a man whose position in the stage world was unassailable. To be "on Danvers' books" and in his good books were the essentials for the would-be aspirant to theatrical laurels.

Hence from early morn till late in the afternoon his roomy offices in Covent Garden were besieged by all sorts and conditions of members of *the* profession.

Inside the famous agent's sanctum, upon a certain summer morning, two men were seated. The one was Danvers himself, a slim, dapper, dark man with a somewhat Semitic type of countenance, the other Raymond Venables, actor-manager.

Venables was speaking. "There's a girl amongst the crowd in the waiting-room," he said, "whose face I've never seen before. But, by Jove, she's a stunner. The figure of Diana, complexion like a peach, eyes like the sea of summer, and——" Danvers held up his hand with a deprecating voice. "Well, she's the girl for my money. She's built for the small part of Ruth in *The Good Samaritan*. My tour list is made up, and, bar Ruth, and my leading lady I'm fixed up. That girl's face would alone fill any theatre."

"My dear Ven.," answered Danvers, "let's have her in here. You'll probably get her for thirty shillings or two quid a week. And if Ruth's only a small part, you won't want much rehearsing."

The agent rose from his seat and went to the door. In an instant a sea of girls surged up around him, all eager for a word with the agent. But Danvers was used to importunities. The girl Venables had mentioned to him was easily recognisable. Her extraordinary beauty singled her out at once. She was standing apart from the rest, talking to a young man at her side, evidently no actor, as Danvers' experienced eye told him in a moment.

He beckoned to her. With a slight blush she made her way to his side. The next moment she was in Danvers' sanctum. Venables rose in an instant.

"Miss ——"

"Harlow," put in the girl gently.

"Miss Harlow. You wish to go on the stage, I believe. Have you had any experience?"

"None whatever. But I am very anxious to get on."

"Then half the battle is won. I can offer you a small part in a travelling company of which I am manager. We open at Scarborough in August with *The Good Samaritan*, as the play is called. I can offer you a small part at £2 a week. Will you accept it?"

"Gladly." Hazel Harlow's beautiful face flushed with pleasure.

"Then all that remains is to fix up details."

Twenty minutes later and Hazel Harlow had signed her agreement for her first entrance into stage life.

As for Venables, his feelings were that at last he had hit upon a "star." Even the phlegmatic Danvers had to allow that Hazel Harlow was one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen.

When Venables left the agent's, with the agreement signed by his new acquisition in his pocket, he was still somewhat perturbed in his mind. For he was without a leading lady, and he could find no one who would suit his requirements.

"Mr. Venables," said a soft voice in his ear.

He wheeled round. "Valerie Bellairs!" he ejaculated. "How are you, old girl?"

The actress smiled. "Fit enough," she answered with a roguish smile, "only I want a 'shop.'"

Venables laughed. "That's a good wheeze," he answered. "Fancy our only Valerie saying she wants a 'shop,' when half the managers in London would give their heads to have her sign on for three years."

Valerie bowed. "Perhaps," she answered; "but I happen to have taken a fancy to the part of Ruth in *The Good Samaritan*, and——"

"Great Scott!" Venables broke in almost roughly, "you're joking. Why, what are you talking about? Do you mean to tell me that *you*, you of all people, want to go back to the road again?"

"Yes, and for £5 a week you can have me."

Venables' astonishment was too great for words. "Oh, look here," he said. "Come along to Gatti's and have a bottle of fizz, and sign on before you repent. But do you really mean it?"

The actress nodded. Venables said no more. He could only wonder in the deepest astonishment at the extraordinary whim suddenly evinced by his companion. Women *were* strange cattle! Yet had he known the real motive that had induced Valerie Bellairs to offer herself for the part that he had been so eager to find a suitable interpreter for, his amazement would have been still more intense. The awakening was to be rude indeed.

Hazel Harlow's adventures grow more exciting every week.

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CHAPTER II.

Alice Monteith was alone in the drawing-room of the house in which she and her brother Eric lived. She was awaiting the return of her brother and Hazel Harlow, the girl who had gone off under Eric's protection to beard Mark Danvers in his den, with what result we know.

Suddenly the sound of the front door being opened caused the girl to spring up. The next moment Eric and Hazel entered the room. One glance at the young girl's radiant face told Alice that success had attended the venture.

"I've got an engagement in a touring company, Miss Monteith," cried Hazel. "Isn't it splendid?"

Alice threw a quick glance at her brother's grave face. She saw something there that filled her with vague alarm.

"What do you think, Eric?" she asked.

Monteith hesitated. "I hate to play the part of a wet-blanket," he said finally; "but, although I congratulate Miss Harlow with all my heart on her success, I cannot help feeling that her difficulties are not yet over."

Hazel's face paled. "What do you mean, Mr. Monteith?" she asked breathlessly.

"As we left the agent's," went on Eric gravely, "I caught sight of a woman who looked at you, Miss Harlow most intently—with malignance, it seemed. For a moment I could not remember where I had seen her. Suddenly I recollected. It was the woman I had seen at Caldecott's house on the occasion when you were so foully kidnapped. I looked after her. She was met by a man who came out of Danvers' office, Raymond Venables, the manager who has engaged you. They went off together."

Dead silence followed his words. Then Hazel spoke.

"Miss Valerie Bellairs," she said slowly. "Do you think——"

"I don't know what to think, Miss Harlow. It is not too late to throw up your project, to abandon your desire to go on the stage, to——"

"Never!" cried Hazel with flashing eyes. "What can she do? She cannot hurt me. I have done her no harm. Do not think me ungrateful, Mr. Monteith, Indeed you have already laid me under a debt of gratitude that I can never repay; but—" the girl's eyes kindled anew—"I have set my hand to the plough, and I will not go back now."

Eric realised in an instant that nothing he could say now would shake Hazel's resolve. His heart was filled with sickening forebodings. How could a girl, so pure, so lovely, so unsophisticated as Hazel Harlow, hope to enter upon a stage life with all its trials and temptations, with enemies whose only desire was her downfall, and come through unscathed? Oh, the pity of it! the pity of it!

CHAPTER III.

It was the first rehearsal of *The Good Samaritan* company at the rehearsal room of the Bedford Hotel, in Maiden Lane. With a beating heart Hazel entered the side door of the public house, and made her way up to the room, now really embarked upon her first theatrical venture. The room seemed full of strangers when she entered, and every eye was turned upon her. Raymond Venables stepped forward. "Good-morning, Miss Harlow," he said. "I am delighted to see you. First of all let me introduce you to your fellow comedians. Foremost is Miss Valerie Bellairs——" Hazel started violently, and the rich colour ebbed from her face. Venables looked his surprise. His eyes turned towards Valerie, who was holding out her hand with a smile to the other woman. "You know Miss Bellairs," he murmured.

"Miss Harlow and I have met before," answered Valerie swiftly. "We are going to know one another better," and she clasped Hazel's hand with apparent warmth. Hazel could find no words. Yet, like a flash, Eric's warning of the day before came back to her mind.

But with an effort she forced herself to answer Valerie's greeting with a commonplace remark. "This," went on Venables, in his character of introducer, "is Mr. Clive Pendennis, our lead——" a pale, tall young fellow with a rather dissipated face, whose admiration for the new acquisition to the company appeared with undisguised evidence upon his countenance—"Miss Jenny Lovelace, Mr. Ralph Garden, Miss Templeton Fane, Mr. Hayward Lindsay, Mr. Percy Carruthers—these are our principals. I would introduce you to the supers., only we don't bother about them here."

Trying to master her confusion, Hazel shook hands with her new colleagues. The men struck Hazel as being rather common and loud of speech. They seemed friendly disposed, however. The "ladies" had loud voices and louder laughs.

There is no need to dwell on the details of the rehearsal. Hazel was given her part, quite a small one, and instructed in the initiatory stages of her duties. She had a touching little love-scene with Pendennis in the last act, an episode that the actor showed that he meant to make the most of.

After the rehearsal, Valerie Bellairs approached Hazel calmly pushing aside the obsequious Pendennis, who ventured to offer to escort Hazel home.

"Will you come to my rooms with me, dear?" she said cordially.

Hazel's honest, frank temperament was touched by Valerie's apparent sincerity. Perhaps she had misjudged the actress. And yet she was the friend of Horace Caldecott, the man who had done his best to wreck Hazel's life.

Bellairs saw the other girl's hesitation, and read her thoughts like a book.

"Let bygones be bygones, dear," she said in a low voice. "Horace Caldecott can't hurt you any more. Will you let me be your friend?"

With these words, spoken with so much apparent warmth, all Hazel's suspicions fled. "Thank you," she said gratefully. "I shall esteem your friendship as a great honour."

"Then you will come with me?"

"With pleasure."

Hazel had promised the Monteiths that she would return to their house in the evening.

It was then about three o'clock, so that she would have plenty of time to accompany Valerie and then return to Bayswater.

Valerie hailed a hansom, and the two women were soon bowling away swiftly towards the actress's flat in Victoria.

But few words passed between them during the drive. Each was occupied in their own thoughts—thoughts as widely different as could be.

"And now," said Valerie, when they were alone, "tell me all about yourself."

Next week "Hazel Harlow in Newcastle."

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With ready trustfulness Hazel complied. She told her listener all about her early life at Harlow Farm, how that her father had desired her to marry Squire Caldecott, how she had resolved to escape from such a contingency, how she had come to London.

Valerie's face darkened as she drank in every word of her visitor's story.

"Horace Caldecott wanted to marry you?" she said slowly.

"Yes."

"And you?"

"I loathe him. I feel sure he is a villain."

The actress's face grew harder still. "There are many villains in the world," she said. "You will want all the strength of your nature to resist the men in our profession. Your beauty will lay you open to many temptations—that and your inexperience."

Hazel sighed. Could this be true? Was beauty then of no account save to awaken vice, as a lure to the helpless and unprotected that led to disgrace and ruin?

Valerie Bellairs was watching her visitor intently. "Let us have some tea," she said, breaking in upon the other's musings.

She rang the bell. Tea was brought.

"Sugar and milk?" asked the actress.

"Please," answered Hazel. Her thoughts were still far away, in so much that she did not notice a furtive movement on the part of her hostess, who had slipped a tiny white pellet into her tea-cup, in addition to the sugar and milk.

Hazel stirred her tea slowly. Valerie seemed to have become of a sudden strangely hilarious. She lit a cigarette. "A custom you'll soon get used to on the boards, dear Miss Harlow," she laughed, though Hazel shook her head. Like a panther Valerie's eyes were fixed on the beautiful innocent face before her.

Hazel was just raising the cup to her lips when the re-entrance of the servant caused her to set down the liquid untasted. The maid was followed by a gentleman, whom one glance told Hazel to be Eric Monteith.

With a glad cry the girl arose. "Mr. Monteith!" she said. "Have you come to pay Miss Bellairs a call, too?"

Eric hesitated. Valerie had gone very pale, for she recognised Monteith in a moment as the man who had met her face to face at Horace Caldecott's house. What did he want here?

"Will Miss Bellairs pardon my intrusion?" he said with cold politeness. "The fact is that my sister is called upon to go a journey to-night, and she wished to say good-bye to Miss Harlow before she went. I have a cab outside."

"I'll finish my tea and come at once," cried Hazel impulsively.

Then a strange thing happened. Valerie Bellairs lurched unaccountably forward. Her hand struck the tea-cup that Hazel had raised to her lips for the second time, and sent the dainty piece of china flying to the ground, where it broke into a dozen pieces.

"A thousand pardons!" cried Valerie, in apparent concern. "I can't think how I came to be so careless. Don't let me detain you, *dear* Miss Harlow. We shall meet again before long. *Good*-bye, Mr. Monteith. It *is* nice to think that Miss Harlow has such good friends," with which Parthian shot Valerie bowed her visitors out.

When they had gone the actress uttered an exclamation of anger, and stamped her foot upon the ground.

"So, Mr. Eric Monteith," she muttered, "you've taken up the cudgels for Miss Harlow. Had you come ten minutes later, your precious Hazel would have been drugged and at my mercy." Then her expression changed. "Can he know anything? It was clumsy of me to break the cup as I did, but it wouldn't have done for the girl to have drank it under the circumstances. Bah! What can he know? He can only suspect. It will only be a case of postponing my revenge. And nothing shall baulk me of that. Perdition! How beautiful the little innocent is! And Horace Caldecott loves her." Valerie clenched her teeth as she said these words, and then continued: "And I love him! Yes, he's bad right through; but I don't care. I love him, and *I'll have him yet.* I'll give you a respite, Miss Hazel Harlow, but at Scarborough look out for squalls."

And in the meanwhile Hazel was driving back towards Bayswater with Eric. The young man had explained to her that his sister's departure was a myth. He had come solely and simply to take Hazel away from Valerie Bellairs. "They told me at the Bedford," he said, "that you had gone off with her. I followed you, and——" He broke off. He dared not give voice to all the forebodings that crowded in upon his brain, dared not try and realise how dear Hazel had grown to him, how he longed to be always at her side, to protect her from any fancied harm. And so he kept silent. The question that surged through his brain remained unspoken: *Why had Valerie Bellairs upset the tea-cup?*

Had she meant foul play? He could scarcely repress a groan. For Valerie was the woman who would be with Hazel every day in a short time—would travel with her, act with her, perhaps lodge with her. And Hazel, with her innocent trustfulness, her unsullied soul, would look upon danger and see it not. Was ever lover's soul tortured more?

And, moreover, Eric knew that neither he nor Hazel had yet heard the last of Horace Caldecott

CHAPTER IV.

Let folks say what they will, the fact must always remain that stage-life is beset with trials and temptations for men and women whose refinement keeps pace with their desire to win fame in their profession.

And to Hazel Harlow, whose life had, up till now, been spent amidst the peace and quietude of the country—a peace broken only by Horace Caldecott's hateful wooing—the revelation of all that the life of a strolling player meant, seemed to become more terrifying every day.

The stainless purity of her soul, coupled with her great beauty, proved, by their rarity, immense snares to her susceptibilities. In the first place, Raymond Venables, the manager of the company, had fallen violently in love with her, while "Clive Pendennis"—whose real name, by-the-bye, was Edmund Jenkins—had in a wonderfully short space of time begun to pay her unwelcome attentions. The other male members of the company, oblivious to the fact of her unassumed modesty and purity, made no disguise of their admiration and readiness to avail themselves of opportunities of showing their appreciation of her charms.

Nor was this all. The "ladies" of the company, with two exceptions, gave her the cold shoulder, jealous of her superior attractions, and incensed by her "stuck-up airs," as they styled her efforts to preserve her womanly virtues.

The two exceptions were Valerie Bellairs and Jenny

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Lovelace, the "soubrette" of the company—an impulsive, warm-hearted, merry little soul, who had a mind above petty jealousies, and was perfectly ready to bow down to Hazel's beauty and accept her as a friend. The two became fast friends, despite their incongruities, a fact that gave Valerie—who always treated Hazel deferentially and politely, for her own aims—cause for much hidden resentment. Jenny Lovelace made no disguise of her dislike for "the Bellairs," despite the latter's recognised talents and fame as an actress.

Hazel's was, as has been mentioned, only a small part. Her lack of experience was soon counterbalanced by her conscientiousness and desire to shine in the profession she had chosen. And so the time passed quickly along until at last the day drew near for the commencement of the tour in Scarborough.

Of Caldecott Hazel had heard nothing since the day when he had been brought home unconscious. Neither could Eric give her any information as to the scoundrel's movements. His town house was shut up, and he himself had gone, no one knew whither. Valerie never mentioned him when talking with Hazel.

Hazel started violently, and the rich colour ebbed from her face.

Indeed, Miss Bellairs was kindness itself to Hazel, who was ready enough to forget and forgive, and who was already lulled into a false sense of security by Valerie's behaviour. She failed to discern the keen blade that was so adroitly sheathed in the velvet scabbard of the actress's suave manner.

Hilda Hatherleigh was the stage name assumed by Hazel. At first she had been averse to sailing under false colours. It was only at Eric and his sister's urgent request that she had at last consented to adopt a *nom de guerre*.

And at last the day came when the company assembled at the Great Northern terminus, *en route* for Scarborough and the Theatre Royal.

CHAPTER V.

"I HAVE a confession to make, Alice."

"What is it, Eric?"

"I'm head over ears in love."

"With Hazel Harlow."

"Yes." And Eric Monteith gazed gloomily out of window upon the London street.

"And does she reciprocate your affection?" asked Alice gently.

"Not yet. But I pray Heaven she may." The young man wheeled abruptly round. "Look here, Alice, I'm going to Scarborough to-night. There's a train gets there about four to-morrow morning. I'm not going to let Hazel know I'm going. But I'm frightfully anxious about her. I can't get the idea out of my head that she's in danger. I *must* go, even if I'm making a fool of myself."

Alice knew her brother far too well to offer any opposition to his intention. And, besides, she had been captivated by Hazel's charms. She would dearly like to see her only brother happily married to the beautiful maiden who had unwittingly stolen his heart.

Let the Editor hear what you think of "Adventures of an Actress."

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So all she said was: "Go, by all means, dear brother."

Eric kissed her fondly upon the cheek.

"How good you are to me, sister mine," he said.

He flew off to pack a bag. It was three days since the departure of *The Good Samaritan* company. Alice had had a short note from Hazel to say that they had had a very successful first night, and that she was enjoying Scarborough very much. The weather was perfect, and in the daytime she found plenty to amuse herself with.

It was a glorious summer morning when Eric arrived at Scarborough. There was a delicious freshness in the keen air that blew off the sea, while a faint haze betokened the advent of a perfect day.

There was scarcely a soul about, as was natural at that early hour, and Eric sauntered through the streets towards the promenade, meaning to sit there for an hour or so, before gaining admission at the Royal Hotel, St. Nicholas Street, the establishment he had patronised upon a former visit to the watering-place.

Sitting down upon one of the seats on the promenade, and turning up the collar of his light overcoat—for the early morning air was chilly—he lit a cigarette, and let his thoughts turn towards the plans for his future course of action, the self-constituted guardianship of Hazel Harlow.

"I should very much like to know where Mr. Horace Caldecott is at this moment," he mused, "also why on earth Miss Valerie Bellairs—who must surely have no difficulty in finding a London manager willing to engage her at, at least, £30 a week—why this noted actress should suddenly take it into her head to go on tour with a provincial company, where salaries rule small, and discomforts high. That's a question that wants answering, and I'll try and answer it before I leave Scarborough."

Suddenly the sound of footsteps proceeding slowly along the promenade towards the Spa Buildings attracted Eric's attention. He looked up to see a tall, strongly-built, bearded man, shabbily dressed, with a slouch hat pulled over his eyes, sauntering forward in a particularly aimless manner.

He looked furtively at Eric as he passed the seat upon which the young man sat. But Monteith had the appearance of being fast asleep. He had left his luggage at the station to be forwarded to his hotel. "Out on the spree, last night," muttered the stranger as he slouched past.

But Eric was very wide awake. His sporting instincts were aroused. It was not yet five o'clock. What should a man of the stranger's appearance be doing on Scarborough's promenade at so early an hour?

The question was answered without delay. The figure of a woman, cloaked and veiled, coming from the opposite direction, suddenly appeared in view. The motive for the early morning walk of the man in the slouch hat was made apparent by his coming to a halt before the woman, who had evidently come at that early hour for some business that could not be transacted at another time.

Languidly curious, Eric watched the pair from the corners of half-closed eyes. They threw a glance in his direction, and the man made some remark, with the result that they sat down upon a seat barely one hundred yards away from where Monteith reclined.

As the woman took her seat, she threw back for a few seconds the veil that cloaked her features. In a moment Eric's heart began beating with mad excitement. *It was Valerie Bellairs!*

What could the actress be doing at that early hour? Who was her companion? All Monteith's faculties leapt up with renewed vigour. The love he bore for Hazel Harlow had made him a detective, had made him see danger in every action of Valerie Bellairs.

The man and woman talked earnestly together for some time. Then Valerie rose to her feet. The man followed her example. She said something, of course inaudible to Eric, to her companion, and hurried away. The man raised his hat, and then, thrusting his hands into his coat pockets, strolled slowly back the way he had come.

As he passed Eric, Monteith was still sleeping, apparently. The man paused. The sleeper sprang to his feet. He looked extraordinarily wide awake for a man who a moment before had been in the depths of slumber.

The man looked his astonishment. Eric looked at him fixedly for a moment. The next instant he found his voice.

"What was that woman saying to you?" he said quietly.

The man started back as though he had been stung. "What d'ye mean?" he said hoarsely. "What's that to you?"

"A good deal. You'd better answer my question." If not——"

"What will you do if I don't?"

"Give you in charge, well"—Eric spoke with a curious significance—"you know what for."

Now Monteith knew nothing whatever about the man or his antecedents. He had merely drawn his bow at a venture. The arrow went home into the very heart of the target.

The man went pale. "See here, guv'nor," he said, "who are you? How did you find out?"

Eric's answer was a significant gesture. He dared not commit himself further, though it was plain that the man before him had some secret in his life that he had no desire of becoming known.

"Look here," Eric went on, a new inspiration having suddenly come to him. "I'll lie low about you and what I know, for a consideration. Let me take on the job that woman wanted you to do, and I'll give you £5 to clear out of Scarborough."

"How did you know she wanted me to do anything? And it was £50 she promised me."

Eric could scarcely restrain a chuckle. The second arrow had gone home like the first, and had had better results. The man was condemning himself out of his own mouth.

Monteith's face grew very stern. "Listen to me once and for all," he said. "Either you tell me all she told you, take £5 and clear, or—well, we'll go straight to the police-station and I'll tell all I know."

The strings of a guilty conscience are powerful incentives to obedience. It was good for Eric's schemes that the spur he used, had so much unknown weight behind it. The man gazed in his face, read a finality and knowledge that by no means existed, and—capitulated with out a further struggle.

"I'll give in, guv'nor," he said huskily; "but don't let's stay here. Come on to St. Nicholas Cliff. We shall be safe from interruption there. You shall have my job and willing. If I hadn't been so hard up I'd never have taken it on."

Eric complied with the stranger's desire for less publicity. The pair crossed the cliff bridge, and sat down

Hazel Harlow's adventures grow more exciting every week.

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in the assured privacy that the early morning gave them at that spot.

"I'm not going to tell you how I came to know Miss Bellairs," the man began somewhat sullenly.

"Oh, I know Mr. Caldecott," broke in Eric.

The man swore under his breath. Monteith's quick intuition had tapped the only source from which the fair Valerie could have become acquainted with a rascal such as this fellow evidently was.

"Well, you seem to know a lot," the stranger went on gloomily. "Let's begin with Miss Bellairs asking me if I wanted to earn fifty quid. I says yes. She then tells me that she has a down on a Miss Hilda Hatherleigh"—then Monteith's forebodings were not groundless—"and wanted her—well, 'er got out of the way for a bit.

"So I was to come down here, and one night to present myself at the Theatre Royal with a note for Miss Hatherleigh"—the man took a sealed envelope addressed, "Miss Hilda Hatherleigh, urgent," out of his pocket—"I was to give it to Miss Bellairs, who would give it to the other one. After the show they were to accompany me to 95, North Row. I was to pretend to attack Miss Bellairs and the other, who was to be chloroformed. Miss Bellairs was to skedaddle, and the other——"

"You needn't say any more, I understand," broke in Eric sternly. "So you were going to add murder to your other crimes, you confounded ruffian, were you?"

"No, not murder, guv'nor. I swear that. The girl was to be got away to London, and—well, there are plenty of ways of getting rid of a girl there without killing her."

The cold-blooded villainy of this wretch for a moment made Eric long to seize him by the throat and hurl him over the cliff. Restraining himself with an effort, he turned to him, and said curtly:

"I'll give you three hours to get out of Scarborough." He looked at his watch. "There's a train at nine, or thereabouts. You go by that, or"—his rage almost mastered him—"I'll have you clapped back again into the prison you ought never to have left, as sure as my name is what it is. And if you make an effort to hold any communication with Miss Bellairs, I'll never rest till I see you hunted down to the doom you deserve." So saying, he thrust the note, delivered into his hand by the other, into his pocket.

His vehemence genuinely frightened the cowardly ruffian beside him. Eric took five pounds from his purse. "Here's all the blood-money you'll get," he said contemptuously. "Now make tracks!"

The man needed no second bidding. He literally took to his heels, while Eric strolled slowly towards breakfast and his hotel, pondering deeply over all that he had heard, and thinking out his own future plan of campaign.

CHAPTER VI.

HAZEL HARLOW was in her dressing-room on the evening of the day that had dawned so eventfully for Eric Monteith.

The theatre was filling up, for Scarborough did not often have the chance of seeing so well-known an actress as Valerie Bellairs, while already the beauty of the *ingenue*, "Hilda Hatherleigh," had proved that Raymond Venables' selection had been the "draw" he had hoped and believed.

Venables himself was taking a small part in the play, the theme of which was that an unpolished exterior often hides an interior of sterling worth. Valerie Bellairs as Ruth—"The Good Samaritan"—a madcap, and apparently a worthless woman, turned out at the conclusion of the play to be a heroine in the truest sense of the word.

This was the peg upon which dialogue and scenes were hung.

Venables was standing at the wings as Hazel came down from her dressing-room, ready for her first "call."

The manager drew a deep breath. "How lovely you look to-night," he murmured in Hazel's ear.

The girl drew herself up. There was a sparkle in her eyes as she answered: "Don't fish in profitless waters, Mr. Venables."

"I'll give you anything you like for a kiss," answered the enamoured Venables, who now never tried to conceal the passion he felt for his *ingénue*.

"The first man I allow to kiss me," answered Hazel with a flush and a voice full of contempt, "will do so because I love him and mean to be his wife."

"And couldn't I be that man?"

"Never, Mr. Venables."

The manager groaned, but further conversation—typical of many such carried on between Hazel and Venables, who pestered the poor girl with his attentions—was cut short by the *ingénue's* appearance behind the footlights. A great round of applause greeted her entrance.

At the conclusion of the play Valerie Bellairs came to Hazel with a grave face.

"Here's a man just brought this note for you, dear," she said. "It's marked 'Urgent.'"

Hazel looked at the note carelessly. Already, brief though her stage career was, she had become accustomed to *billets-doux* from unknown admirers, invitations to supper, and the like attentions, all of which she steadfastly took no notice of.

Was this letter another such as this? Suddenly her face paled. There was no mistaking the handwriting on the envelope. It was written in the large, sprawling caligraphy of her father, Farmer Harlow.

She tore open the letter. It was as follows:—

92 North Row,
Scarborough.

DEAR HAZEL,

I've tracked you at last, only to lose you. I'm sorely stricken—dying maybe. If you want to see your unhappy father alive in this world, accompany the bringer of this note,

Your father,
HARLOW.

Hazel read the scanty message over two or three times before the full meaning of it was borne in to her brain. Her father! Here in Scarborough! Dying! There could be no mistake about the handwriting. She would have sworn anywhere that her father's hand had penned that note.

Helplessly she turned to Valerie, who stood beside her, with eyes that seemed to devour every detail of her countenance.

"Read it!" said Hazel in a low voice.

Valerie took the note and mastered the contents. Then she turned to the other.

"I will come with you," she said in a voice that rang genuinely of help and pity.

"I'll ask Jenny Lovelace to come," began Hazel, her thoughts turning to her recognised friend in her perplexity, rather than to Valerie, whom she felt she never could really like.

Next week "Hazel Harlow in Newcastle."

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"And while you look for Jenny, your father may be breathing his last."

"True," replied Hazel. "Let us go. Is the messenger outside?"

The messenger was at the stage door—a tall, muffled figure in a slouch hat and somewhat seedy clothes, whose face was undiscernible in the gloom.

"This is Miss Harlow," said Valerie. The man nodded and motioned to the women to follow him. He hurried away from the theatre, and, leaving the main thoroughfare, turned down into a small side street. Before a door, numbered 92, he paused, and, fitting a key into the keyhole, threw it open. Valerie and Hazel stepped into a little hall, where intense darkness reigned.

The guide opened a door to the right, and ushered his guests into a small room lit by a solitary gas flare. There was no furniture in the room save a chair and a dilapidated table.

"My father," began Hazel, somewhat nervously, "where is he?"

For answer the man strode to the door of the room and with a swift motion turned the key in the lock. Then he turned to Valerie, who seemed somewhat surprised at his movements, and with a quick gesture threw off hat, cloak, and the false hair that had concealed his face from view.

With a faint cry Valerie fell back, in the blankest amazement. As for Hazel, she pressed her hands to her eyes to convince herself that she was not dreaming.

"Mr. Monteith!" she muttered.

Eric made a bow.

"Good evening, Miss Valerie Bellairs," he said. "You didn't expect to see me here, did you?"

The expression on Valerie's face was terrible in its malignant concentration and baffled rage. Her eyes seemed to flash fire. Her bosom rose and fell in spasmodic sobs. She wrenched a revolver from her pocket.

"It's you again, is it?" she screamed. "Well, you've crossed my path once too often!" and the mad woman—for mad she was at that moment—levelled her pistol at Eric's head.

But she had forgotten Hazel. With a bound the girl sprang across the room and seized Valerie's wrist with a grip that a healthy country life had given her young muscles the capacity to employ—a grip that rendered Valerie powerless to fire her deadly weapon.

The next moment Eric had secured the weapon itself, and "the Bellairs" was disarmed.

"You shan't add murder to your other crimes, Miss Bellairs," he said quietly. "Will you come with me to the police-station?"

There was something in Eric's quiet, resolute manner that brought Valerie to her senses far quicker than any hot denunciation of her actions could have done.

The fierce light faded from her eyes. She looked helplessly at the man who, she realised, had foiled her once again in her dastardly attempt to get rid of the girl whose only crime was a beauty few men could resist. All the resolution died out of her. Fear, abject fear,

The figure of a woman, cloaked and veiled, coming in the opposite direction, suddenly appeared in view.

Look out for when Hazel Harlow visits your town.

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sprang up in its place. She fell on her knees before Eric.

"Spare me," she wailed. "I meant Miss Harlow no real harm. She stole the man I love from me, and I wanted to get her away to a place of secrecy, so that he would believe she was dead, or had disappeared for ever from his ken. That was all. I swear it!"

"Don't kneel to me, Miss Bellairs," answered Eric coldly. "Your protestations are in vain. The man you employed was a nameless villain. What fate you had in store for Miss Harlow I know not. Yet I know enough to feel convinced that you meant to try and ruin her body and soul, to get her conveyed away to some vile den, where death, and worse than death, must have been in store for her. Providence sent me to frustrate your evil plans. With Miss Harlow's assent, I shall have you conveyed to the police-station, where——"

But Hazel sprang forward.

"No, no!" she cried vehemently, though her face was deadly pale, and she could not bear to look Valerie in the face, "not that, not that! Let her go, Mr. Monteith! Let her go!"

Eric bit his lip. He knew full well the tender womanliness that inspired Hazel's words. As for Valerie, she sprang to her feet, hope in her eyes.

"Listen," she said quickly, "I'll confess. I wrote to your father, Miss Harlow. I didn't tell him where you were. I told him to write a letter, the substance of which I supplied, to be forwarded to me that I might get you to return home. He did as I asked. I then made up my mind to have you incarcerated in London for a time, until I—I—had married Horace Caldecott."

A shudder ran through Hazel's frame.

"Will you take me back to my rooms, Mr. Monteith?" she said faintly.

In a moment Eric had placed her hand within his arm. The next moment Valerie Bellairs was alone.

"How can I thank you? Again you have been my saviour!" murmured Hazel, as Eric piloted her along the quiet streets.

"By becoming my wife," Eric longed to answer. But he felt that it would be ungenerous to press his suit now. He only said: "I only want your friendship, not your thanks." He then told Hazel how he had witnessed the interview between Valerie and the hired ruffian. "I determined to impersonate the man myself," he said. "I found out that Miss Bellairs had hired 92 North Row, a long deserted house, for a week, and for a sum of money that made inquiry superfluous. What would have happened had I not come to Scarborough last night and, by the hand of Providence, put right in the way of fathoming the intended crime, I dare not contemplate. Thank God you are safe."

There was such fervour in his voice that Hazel longed to be able to say: "You have earned the right to be my protector for life. Marry me." But as yet love had not awakened the power in her to give herself heart and soul to this man, who loved her so. She sighed and murmured out broken words of thanks. And with a dull pain at his heart, Eric realised that as yet he had no further right to ask Hazel to return the passionate love that surged like a mighty tempest in his breast.

CHAPTER VII.

"Valerie Bellairs has gone! What on earth shall I do? Was ever man in a worse hole?" And Raymond Venables stamped up and down his room like a man possessed.

It was the day after the events narrated in the preceding chapter. Valerie Bellairs had not dared to face the music again. Without a word of explanation beyond a curt note to the manager and a cheque for the money due to her during her term of agreement, she had disappeared.

Venables rushed round to Hazel's rooms, and, throwing ceremony to the winds, broke in upon her and Jenny Lovelace while at breakfast.

"Do you know where Valerie Bellairs has gone, and why?" he almost shrieked.

Hazel blushed a rosy red. Then the colour ebbed out of her face. For a moment she hesitated. "I do know," she said, in a low voice; "but I cannot tell you."

The manager stared at her in amazement.

"What plot is this?" he growled. "And what on earth am I to do without my lead?"

Jenny Lovelace sprang to her feet.

"Give Hilda Hatherleigh the lead," she cried, "and me her part. Cora Bond can take my part, and you can easily rake up someone to walk on for her."

Jenny's vehemence saved the situation, and drew the manager's bewildered thoughts into a new channel. He seemed to forget Valerie's existence, and the remarkable avowal Hazel had just made.

"Can you do it, Miss Harlow?" he cried anxiously. "It's a chance for you, and no mistake."

"I can but try," answered the girl gently.

"Then finish breakfast and come down to the theatre at once. We shall have to spend the rest of the day in rehearsing. I'll go and beat up the rest of the crowd," and without more ado he rushed from the room.

Jenny—whom Hazel had taken completely into her confidence—executed an impromptu skirt-dance round the table.

"Ta-ta, Bellairs!" she laughed. "Our chance has come, Hazel! We've cut the cat's claws! Venables will be too excited now to bother his head about Miss Valerie's exit. He's got the show to think of."

And that night the Scarborough audience howled themselves hoarse over the beautiful "Hilda Hatherleigh," whose rendering of the part vacated by Valerie Bellairs was unanimously voted a triumph in every way.

And among the audience was Eric Monteith. While Hazel had but little difficulty in guessing to whom she was indebted for a wonderful bouquet handed to her after her first appearance as "the Good Samaritan."

But Hazel's troubles were not yet over. The next town at which *The Good Samaritan* company was billed to appear in was Newcastle. Here it was the beautiful young debutante's lot to experience an adventure more thrilling even than the one related in this week's Short Stories.

WHAT SORT OF A PERSON ARE YOU?

What do people think of you? You don't know, of course. But your handwriting will tell you what your character is like. Send a specimen to—

RANEE, 21 Pearson's Buildings,
Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Inclose six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope with each specimen of handwriting.

The Reappearance of Garton Hope.

"I, HENRY SUTTON LYLE, knowing that I have but a few hours to live, do desire, in this my extremity, to disburden myself of a great crime; and, having done so, to avow, as before my Maker, my innocence of a greater.

"Twice have I stood at the bar to answer for the slaying of Mr. Garton Hope. On the first occasion, the judge, seeing that no body had been found, decided that I could not be proceeded against. Since then, I have been tried; found guilty of a murder I never committed, and—condemned.

"To-morrow morning, before the sun is fairly up, I am to die. But it will be as a man innocent of a brother man's blood. I now confess however—as one being in the antechamber of death—that I was guilty of wicked perjury when, a year ago, I accused myself of compassing Garton Hope's murder. Why I did this is known only to myself. Were I to reveal my motives it would not save me now.

"Why Garton Hope went away, or whither he bent his steps, I do not know. I only know that I did not kill him; that when I said I did, I lied! God forgive me! and be with me to-morrow!

"Yet one more word, and then—supreme knowledge!

"Within three months of my death, will Garton Hope return to take his place among his fellow-men. *He* will do me justice. Within three months,—and,—*I shall know it!* Amen!

"(Signed) HENRY SUTTON LYLE.
"May 4th, 1899."

* * * * *

In the summer of '97, there sat at dinner by an open window, looking out upon an up-river reach of water, three people—two men and a woman—the elder of the former, the most remarkably noticeable of the party.

A thoughtful man—his eyes, dreamy and far-away of expression, indicated that. A man, too, one would imagine, who would both do and suffer more than most men. Not grey, but inclining to it; the full, reddish-brown beard giving an air of masterful dignity to the otherwise super-sensitive features. Add to this that he stood well over six feet, and you have the man in brief—Garton Hope, the millionaire ex-colonist and sheep farmer in the flesh.

The other was just the ordinary "Society" male—to the "ordinary" observer that is—a trifle *dilettante*, more than a trifle selfish, and yet not, on the whole, an altogether bad fellow. Harry Lyle was the poor cadet of a poor "blue blood" family; and as such had to study the main chance, whensoever and wheresoever the opportunity for so doing presented itself. Dapper, opiniative, and not over knowledgeful, he contrived to render himself popular, after a fashion, in his little circle. Yet was all this but as the shell, the rind, the outer cuticle of the man; few people discerning beneath it the real grip and grit of a fine nature, actually existent there.

The lady—but by her own mouth shall she be discovered, it being merely noted that Xenia Brooke was young (two-and-twenty); fair (very); and bewitchingly bubbling over with absolutely infectious laughter—laughter without in it one discordant note or phrase.

"Mr. Hope," she was saying, in reply, evidently, to some observation of his. "You are really and truly going at last to settle down among us—to make London your home?"

"Yes, I think so—that is, if I can but get that which I covet."

"You covetous!" cried Xenia, a merry ripple floating out over the sun-flecked river until it reached the lock upon the other side. "You covetous! Why I don't think that a more generous man exists in all the world than you—saving your presence! Mr. Hope, you are surely joking!"

"No, Miss Brooke I am not," but spite an attempt to carry it off lightly, a keen observer might have detected in Garton Hope's voice a hesitant sadness; in his eyes a more than usual dreaminess of manner. "No, I am not joking. I am tired of roving about the earth, doing the Wandering Jew without the inducement that that uncomfortable person must, I take it, have had."

"And have you decided upon a house, yet? Have you thought about it?"

"I am afraid I must say No, again," he answered her, "I have—well—I have an important affair—important, that is, to me—to arrange first," here he looked steadfastly and earnestly at her; "that done, successfully done, I shall seek a habitation and a home.

Up to this Harry Lyle had kept silence. Dinner over,

Hazel Harlow's adventures grow more exciting every week.

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he was now lounging at the window, apparently absorbed in the aquatic panorama passing below.

This last remark, however, of Garton Hope's, stimulated him to the exertion of making comment.

"Thought you had done with business," he said. "Left it behind you at Woolla-Woolla."

"So I have," retorted the other; "but—well, I cannot exactly explain—now."

"Oh! don't apologise, my dear fellow! I'm not in any way curious. I leave all that sort of thing to Xenia—and with very good reason; for I happen to know, being her cousin."

"And, sir, being my cousin, you often take unwarrantable liberties in the way of probing my motives and making yourself generally objectionable!"

"Hear her, Hope! hear her!" cried the young man. "One would imagine that I deserved hanging, at the very least, if all that she says be true."

"As it most certainly is!" said Xenia, with the slightest possible suspicion of a pout.

"Ah, well, I shall take a stroll for an hour, and return when the carriage is ready. I know that you, Xenia, are dying to do the honours of the old Palace; and that Hope is obediently waiting for his chain and muzzle. *Au revoir!*"

The two left behind sat for a few minutes without speaking; and then, on Hope's initiative, they quitted the hotel.

The waiter who had served the party, on their departure found, on the floor under Garton Hope's chair, a morocco leather pocket-book, evidently dropped by that gentleman. He put it on one side for return to its owner later on.

Walking in the direction of the park. The glades and avenues of stately elms and chestnuts were in all their glory, and Garton Hope, at Xenia's side, and slowly pacing the velvety sward under the leafy shadow, deemed earth to be Heaven, desiring no other interpretation.

Ever since his introduction to her the season before he had worshipped the very ground upon which she trod. Time and again had he sought the necessary courage to tell his tale, but had always failed upon the crisis.

When Xenia and her cousin had accepted his invitation to dine with him up the river, he desperately thought that, perchance, some opportunity would be given him for speaking to her—for reaching out towards his heart's desire.

That he was years and years her senior did not occur to him. He was one of those ever-young natures who, young to the end, are at once the admiration and the scorn of the rising generation.

It was done before he well knew it; and she, Xenia, for once in her life was grave and sorrowful beyond recognition.

"Mr. Hope," she said, "you should not! you should not! for I can have but one answer for you! You must not ask me why I refuse you, as I am compelled to do. Nay, I accuse you wrongfully, for you are too knightly to even think of it. I am sorry—very sorry—for you.

"And now let us get back, please, for Harry may, perhaps, be waiting for us."

Disappointed people are ever more keenly alive to shades of meaning in others, than are their more fortunate fellows.

Garton Hope fancied that he could detect in Xenia's casual mentioning of her cousin's name a something verylike to interest, or, perhaps, a deeper feeling.

This notion, rapidly incepted, as rapidly became a fixed idea that grew, and grew with every moment.

At the foot of the hotel steps he lifted his hat, craved pardon for half-an-hour's absence, and turned his face again towards the park.

From that moment nothing was seen or heard of Garton Hope.

The police, and a certain proportion of public opinion, counted the missing man as dead, and this, although no body was found.

Garton Hope had vanished, and that utterly.

* * * * *

Three days after the dinner at Hampton Court, Harry Lyle called at Pont Street and asked for his cousin Xenia.

There was a peculiar look about her, he thought. The merry, irresponsible laughter was gone, completely gone, in its stead being a curious, grave decidedness, a marked disposition to hear all, and to say as little as possible.

After expressing his regretful wonder at Hope's strange disappearance, Lyle stated the object of his visit. It was to formally ask the hand of his cousin. He quite believed that he had her heart; told her so, indeed; and assured her that his was hers for ever.

He was not prepared for that which followed.

She had listened with a silent impassiveness, but when he had ended his pleading she told him that of all men she loved him least.

"Do you know why? Shall I tell you why?" she flung at him, her usually dancing eyes blazing with wrath, her limbs trembling so with passionate excess that he feared she was ill, or—out of her mind. "Well, I *will* tell you. It is because *I believe you to have killed Garton Hope!*"

* * * * *

On the evening of the 8th of June, 1898, a gentleman, well-dressed, and of age five-and-twenty, or thereabouts, descended from a hansom at the door of a certain police-station in the West End, and, entering, asked for the inspector on duty.

"You are looking, I believe," said he, quite collectedly, and in matter-of-fact tones, "for the presumable murderer of Mr. Gordon Hope. Well, *I killed him!*"

You might have knocked down the astonished inspector with a feather.

"Oh, it is quite right! But be good enough, please, to give this," handing some loose silver to an attendant constable, "to the cabby. Thanks! And now, inspector, do your duty."

The still wondering official could hardly take it in that this courteous, refined gentleman was in earnest—was a slayer of men! His common sense seemed to scoff at it.

"Are you sure, sir?" said he; "quite sure, that this isn't a genuine practical joke. If it is, then, although it is a very poor one, I'm disposed to take your word for it and end the game."

"No," said Henry Lyle, "it is not a practical joke, or a game. I met Mr. Hope——"

"Excuse me, sir; but I must caution you that anything you may now say will be used in evidence against you at your trial."

Next week "Hazel Harlow in Newcastle."

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"I quite understand that, of course. Well, as I was going to say, I met Mr. Hope in Bushey Park, as I was returning to the hotel, where he, my cousin, Miss Xenia Brooke, and myself had been dining earlier. Mr. Hope and I had words. He accused me of something which I considered disgraceful, but which I do not care to mention, and—*I shot him!*"

"But, sir," said the inspector, "nobody has been found; and although we hold that Mr. Hope has most certainly been murdered, yet I cannot for the life of me see how it could have happened in the way you state."

"That is your affair," said the voluntary prisoner. "I shot him!—that is all I know. As to what became of his body I am as ignorant as you are. With regard to my share in the transaction, perhaps this will convince you. Mr. Hope had in his possession a large morocco leather pocket-book. In this book was a paper I needed. Well, I took the case from him, and—*here it is!*" handing it to the inspector.

As a matter of fact, the pocket-book had been delivered to Lyle by the hotel people, with the idea that Mr. Hope's friend was the proper person to have possession of it until the rightful owner turned up.

"Good Lord!" ejaculated the inspector. "So it is." Then, after a bewildered pause: "It will be my duty, Henry Sutton Lyle, to detain you, pending inquiries, as having, on your own confession, killed one Garton Hope, by shooting him with a revolver in Bushey Park, on the 14th of August, 1897."

* * * * *

"*The Queen against Lyle.*"

The issue of the first presentment before a jury, and the result of the actual trial, which took place, at the instance of the Public Prosecutor, three months later, are still fresh in the public mind, and therefore generally known.

With regard to Xenia Brooke's experiences, it is far different.

Completely secluded from Society and the world, she saw no one, from the day of her interview with young Lyle, save her mother. Anything approaching to outside information was not so much as breathed in her presence. It was not that she was exactly mad, or even that her mind was temporarily unhinged. Doctors were puzzled, because that, although this terrible family calamity would, in the nature of things, undoubtedly account for much, it did not act upon her mind and body in the way it should have done, according to the allopathic theory.

Xenia had become, to all intents and purposes, a dumb woman.

One thing only was there capable of rousing her out of her lethargy, and that to a state of frenzy. It was her cousin's name. The danger of speaking it in her hearing was fully realised; but sometimes inadvertently, in an unguarded moment, it would escape her mother's lips, and for days afterwards would Xenia be unapproachable by even that best of friends.

By some means she had contrived to procure a newspaper giving an account of Henry Lyle's condemnation; and it was terrible, horrible even, to witness her exultation.

"Now!" she cried, "Now he will be avenged! Now! now! now! Blood for blood! Harry Lyle for Garton Hope! For once man's justice follows hard after the Almighty's!"

The other friends of the doomed man would have none of his confession of deliberate homicide. His father, General Lyle, V.C., an old Indian veteran, besieged, not alone the Home Office, but the Throne itself.

"He is mad!" he pleaded. "My son is mad! Foolish he may have been—wild, extravagant, even—what young man of spirit is not? but wicked! no! A murderer? NO! He is distraught, I tell you! And in the name of the God of Mercy and of Justice, I ask of you—I demand of you!—not to believe him! and to—have pity upon me!"

But the ears of authority were stopped—the "powers that be" were obstinately deaf to the old man's cry for mercy for his first-born.

Certain press advocates, as representing a large section of the public, spoke strongly for reconsideration. Useless; worse than useless.

If the father's piteous appeal must needs fall to the ground, how could it be that the efforts of the Fourth Estate, powerful as it is, should have it in them to open the door of fate for Henry Lyle?

Of no avail seemed the voice *of* man *with* man *for* man.

So, fearsome, hopeless, it all remained, until the night of the day before that appointed for the last dread exit.

Then a strange thing happened.

At a few minutes before midnight of this same day, an elderly man, white-haired, bowed of shoulder, and wrapped in furs, alighted from the boat train at Charing Cross, and drove immediately to the "Savoy." He was accompanied by one servant, a valet, whose aid was frequently in requisition by reason of his master's feebleness and evident general ill-health.

The gentleman registered at the hotel in the name of Philip Garton; the servant stating for the information of those curious to know, that his master had but now returned from a two years' trip round the world; and that his present state of health was due to fever contracted at Cairo on the way back to England.

Mr. Garton appearing to be well provided with this world's gear, and a suite of apartments on the main floor having been secured for him by telegraph from Paris the day before, the above explanation was accepted as being eminently satisfactory.

Mr. Garton had commissioned his valet to procure everything in the shape of morning and evening newspaper literature.

"Sit down, Barnes," he said, after a light meal, and when he had been placed by his attendant in an armchair by the blazing fire (May of that year was very cold), over which he spread his long thin hands in evident enjoyment. "Sit down, and read me anything that strikes you as being interesting."

Political items, Society doings, public opinion—or rather press opinion—on this, that, and the other occupied the first quarter of an hour.

The hands of the clock on the mantelpiece were nearing "two" when the man read out to the master the following paragraph:

It is now definitely announced that the Home Secretary cannot see any reason for interfering with the due course of law in the case of Henry Sutton Lyle, now under sentence of death for the murder of Mr. Garton Hope in Bushey Park, on the 14th of August, 1897.

The valet will never, so long as he shall live, forget the look of horror and desperate despair such as was on his

Look out for when Hazel Harlow visits your town.

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master's face as he struggled to rise from the depths of his chair.

"Barnes! Barnes! It is life or death! Do you hear, man? Life or death! I must go out!—now, man, now! Quick! I say, dress me, or it will be too late!"

Within half-an-hour the night watchman on duty at the Home Office in Whitehall was roused to something like wakefulness by a summons from a police patrol.

A gentleman, accompanied by a man-servant, was in a four-wheeler at the door.

"The Home Secretary's address? I want it! I must have it—at once!"

This was so unusual a request, and at such an unusual hour, that the watchman might well be pardoned for hesitating to comply with it.

A few words, however, spoken in his ear by the gentleman's companion, speedily put an altogether different complexion upon matters.

The address given—fortunately the Minister was in town—the cab dashed away again in the direction of ——— Square.

It was now well past three, and the Secretary's house, when they arrived in front of it, was silent and dark from roof to basement.

The cabby's vigorous ring at the front door bell echoed and re-echoed through house and street.

"What's up, cabby?" said the policeman on the beat, flashing his bull's-eye on the cab and its occupants.

"Gentleman wants the 'ome Secretary. Case o' life an' death, 'e says."

"Oh! well, I'll make 'em hear!" and forthwith the constable began hammering at the door in veritable Viking fashion.

In a minute or two sounds inside were audible, and then lights gleamed from the upper windows, and anon from the fanlight and sidelights of the entrance.

A rattle of bolts and chains, and the door was flung open by a sleepy-looking footman.

Just fifteen minutes later and the cab, with now an additional passenger, was on its way back again to Whitehall, calling on the route at Scotland Yard.

In another hour that same cab might have been seen waiting outside the grey City prison.

What actually took place inside, no man, save the two intimately concerned, and the chief prison officials, will ever know.

"Shall I tell you why?" she flung at him. "Because I believe you to have killed Garton Hope."

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The two or three night wanderers in the neighbourhood saw in the early morning three people emerge from the prison gate, get into the cab, and drive away westward.

The next morning's papers had a brief preliminary announcement:

"A stop-press message says that Henry Sutton Lyle, who was to have been executed this morning for the murder of Mr. Garton Hope, has been unconditionally released, by special order of the Home Secretary. The reason given is that Mr. Hope is in London, alive, though far from well. Further details may be expected later on."

* * * * *

Two men sat by the fire in a sitting-room at the Savoy.

"Lyle," said the elder, "will you tell me why you did this thing?"

"Only upon your promise given that you will keep my secret."

"Tell me," was all the other said.

"Well, awhile after you had so mysteriously disappeared, I asked Xenia to marry me. She refused, and not only so, but she deliberately accused me of murdering you! I can only suppose that the horrible suggestion, coming as it did from her lips, had an adverse, or rather perverse, influence for the time being upon my reason; for from that moment, until that day when I walked into the police-station and accused myself of the crime, the persuasion in my own mind that I had really slain you became more and more a fixed conviction. It was only when, so to speak, I came to myself after the catastrophe, that I knew what I had done."

"Ah, well!" sighed Garton Hope. "Your first duty, as is mine, is to thank God that I was in time."

"Yes," replied the other. "I suppose so—I am sure so!—but—I shall never understand, never! Now, tell me why you went away."

"Partly," said Hope, "for the same reason that prompted you to your act of mad self-delusion. *I* also asked Xenia Brooke to marry. Also, she refused me; and I—who had put my all into the scale of her love—could not face the inevitable. I fled, as much from myself as from human ken and human association. It is all, of course, very unreasonable, both my act and yours. But I think it should make us better friends; and if you are of the same mind as I am, you will leave London—England—Europe!—behind you, and come with me to a place I wot of by the waters of the Pacific. There on a new earth, beneath new skies, you and I will lead our new lives. Xenia is for neither of us—we know that. What say you?"

"I will go! Just, however, let me bid farewell to my old dad, and to—no, not to Xenia, and then I will go."

* * * * *

As the *Egyptian*, Pacific Mail steamer, came in sight of the Golden Gate on a glorious morning at the summer end of '99, two gentlemen, one much older than the other, stood by the hurricane deck rail, looking at the rapidly nearing shore.

Said the elder, pointing with his finger landwards: "Was I not wise to persuade you?"

"I was wiser far in the being persuaded," said Henry Lyle.

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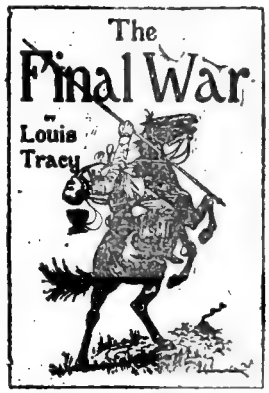

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COMMONPLACE JIM.

"If Jim wasn't so hopelessly commonplace!" sighed Mary Partridge as she leaned over the garden gate and watched her husband's clumsy figure move heavily down the village street. "And it does seem as though he grew more homely and awkward every day of life," muttered she.

A step on the gravel walk aroused her from her discontented musing, and turning, she met the smiling face and handsome dark eyes of the young clerk who boarded next door.

"Don't look so disconsolate, Mrs. Partridge," said he gaily, disclosing his white teeth in a mocking smile. "Jim is coming home to dinner, isn't he?"

"Of course, Mr. Blake," answered Mary, the colour deepening in her face as she moved back a step.

"I—I was only thinking a bit," continued Mary, forcing a smile.

"Come, Mary, tell me all about it," said he softly. "Is marriage a failure or is it not?"

Mary gave a slight toss of her head, and without a word turned and walked swiftly toward the house.

A complacent smile curved the young man's lips as he proceeded on his way.

"That girl is about as much in love with her middle-aged husband as I am," muttered he.

Indeed, that was the whole truth of the matter. Mary Partridge was not in love with her husband and never had been. Like many another village maiden she had grown weary with the struggle for self-maintenance and had accepted her first good offer of marriage. Jim Partridge was a bachelor of forty, plain looking, steady and industrious, earning the good wages of a mechanic, and the owner of a pretty cottage house. To Mary this seemed almost wealth, and smothering her desire for a more romantic attachment, she had gladly accepted the good fortune that had come to her. A year had passed, and with it the novelty of her comfortable surroundings, and a feeling of discontent had crept into Mary's heart.

Jim's quiet good-nature, his simple, unpretending manners and homely domestic ways had begun to pail upon her.

Her face burned and her heart beat uncomfortably as she hastened into the house with Arthur Blake's words ringing in her ears.

"Is marriage a failure, Mary, or is it not?"

Over and over again Mary asked herself this question as she busied herself about the sunny kitchen, dusted her pretty parlour, and arranged the china and silver upon the snowy cloth of the dinner table.

Suddenly the answer came with swift conviction, and Mary clasped her hands together in mute despair. It was a failure—a miserable failure, she thought bitterly.

To give up for ever her freedom, her liberty of action, her every chance in life, for what? Mary's eyes glanced around the room and answered for her. Yes, she had a pretty home, and Jim was kind to her and loved her more than she deserved, and yet, ah! her life was simply unbearable.

With this thought came an uncontrollable desire to escape from the bonds that held her, to snap the chains that she herself had wrought, and to go away, somewhere, anywhere, only to go—go! As if driven by some invisible power, Mary snatched a hat from its nail and rushed from the house.

Across the well-kept grass-plot at the rear of the cottage Mary sped, out though the gate, and over the wide pasture lot that lay between the lawn and the dusty highway.

The sun shone, the birds sang, the grass was strewn with buttercups and daisies, and the air was fragrant with summer's sweetest perfume, but Mary heeded them not. Breathless and panting, she reached the long stretch of country road just as the village clock struck twelve. Jim would be coming home to dinner and sometimes he came that way, thought Mary, and again that feeling that she must flee from him, from the pretty home, the hateful marriage bonds, urged her footsteps. The gleaming railroad track lay across the road a short distance ahead.

The throbbing of her brain, the beating of her heart, deafened her ears to the approaching train, and swiftly she crossed the track. As she gained the other side she saw Jim's familiar figure coming towards her. Again that curious desire to fly from him took possession of her, and she turned back.

"Mary! What are you about?" cried a man's voice and two strong arms pushed her from the track, and she fell forward upon her face in the dusty road while the train thundered on. Stunned for a few moments, Mary did not move, then with an effort she rose to her feet, wondering at the strange silence about her.

Where was Jim? Her dazed eyes glanced up and down the road and fell at last upon a silent form that lay huddled against the track.

"Oh, Jim, have I killed you?" she cried in agony as she bent over him.

Gathering his head and shoulders within her strong young arms, Mary dragged him into the cool grass beneath the shade of a huge tree.

Save for the slow rise and fall of that broad chest, Jim Partridge lay as one dead, and Mary's repentant tears and the touch of her trembling fingers fell unheeded upon that pale face.

It was but a few minutes, but it seemed hours to Mary in her suspense and remorse, before help arrived and her husband was carried slowly and carefully back to his cottage home.

Through the long night hours, while two physicians were working over Jim's poor bruised body, there awoke in the heart of Mary Partridge a revelation. With horror and disgust she looked back upon her wild impulse of the morning.

"If Jim dies he will have given his life for mine," she murmured, through her sobs, "and no man can do more than that. What am I that I should scorn such a love, or call it commonplace?"

"Your husband will live. He has asked to see you," said the physician's voice.

"A pretty close shave, wasn't it?" whispered Jim, as his wife leaned tenderly over him. "But whatever possessed you to come to meet me this morning, Mary?"

"I cannot tell, Jim, dear," answered Mary, as she bent and kissed him.

Next week "Hazel Harlow in Newcastle."

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The GOLDEN DWARF

A Sensational Romance of To-Day.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "A Keeper of Secrets," "Hate, the Destroyer," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS OF "GOLDEN DWARF."

"It is the body of Sir Christopher Dering!"

The words are spoken by a pretty girl—fair-haired, blue-eyed. She stands, horrified, by a grass-grown ditch in a country lane, out of which a great mastiff is climbing. The ditch contains the corpse of a stalwart man—a handkerchief bound over his mouth and nostrils.

Close to there is a strange figure, graceful, well-dressed, even handsome, but with the stature of a boy and the face of an adult. He carries a heavy dog-whip, and stares, fixedly, at the dead body just discovered by his mastiff, Cerberus.

The girl is Esther Carew; the dwarf, Otto Hare, the richest landowner in Derbyshire, and the mystery of Wyresdale, a village in that county. For the first time in fifteen years he has set foot in a public thoroughfare, to attract the attention of Esther, whom he has watched from his park.

Sir Christopher Dering was alive at seven o'clock the preceding day. He and his nephew, Felix, had quarrelled over the latter's love for Esther. Sir Christopher wanted Felix to make a good marriage—the birth of his little cousin Brian has put him out of the succession to the baronetcy. Felix is faithful to the penniless Esther Carew.

Much turns on the whereabouts of Felix on the night before. It appears that he was in Duchester, some miles off, whither he went on business, and spent a night at the theatre. Could he have killed the squire?

Felix in vain protests his innocence.

But the cloud of suspicion gathers around him. Meantime, the child Brian has been kidnapped, and Felix is suspected of this too. He discovers a riding whip with some peculiar marks upon it.

CHAPTER XXIV. (*continued*).

He strolled on, his fingers interlaced behind him, his big head drooped to his breast.

Slowly he lounged down the avenue, cleared the gates, threaded a bye-path to the High-Street, and went along it in the direction of Otto Hare's jealously-enclosed domains.

As he strode by Caleb Forster's shop, someone came from the back of the counter and called to him. Dr. Kraft spun about to behold Archibald Geddes.

"Excuse my stopping you, Professor," observed the Scotchman, "but when you were in the other day you let this fall."

The chemist's assistant proffered a tiny roll of discoloured paper.

Kraft peered at it, and then, quivering with an odd nervousness, caught it and drew it out flat. The motion revealed an unmounted photograph of the snap-shot order.

Geddes looked, not at the exposed sheet, but at the German's countenance. Instead of its native pink it had grown white—a drab, slatey-white.

"Thank you," said Joseph Kraft; the words broke jerkily from his twitching mouth, and he crumpled the photograph to a ball. "Thank you," he reiterated, in the same dazed tone—"a—a curiosity, Mr. Geddes—from abroad."

"Interesting, but—but horrible, don't you think?" reiterated the Scotchman, drily.

Kraft glanced up quickly over his glasses.

"A matter of temperament," he answered; "thank you again, Mr. Geddes, and good night."

Joseph Kraft stalked on, the pallor ebbing from his damp skin. Rounding the corner to the cross-roads, he threw up his arms.

"Sakerment!" he cried; "what luck! what teufel's luck! There are eight hundred fools in this verdamdt hamlet and that cursed picture escapes them all, to reach *his* hands!"

CHAPTER XXV.

In which Foley Carries a Box.

"I just wanted to have a trifle of conversation with you, Mr. Forester, touching what I may almost call a—a family matter. So, as I know you breakfast latish, I timed myself to find you over your second cup of tea."

Inspector Brasher deposited a peaked official cap on the horse-hair sofa in the parlour behind Caleb Forester's shop and sat down at the neat table.

The old chemist, still drowsy from the previous evening's debauch at the "Wheatsheaf," ruffled his silver locks and shot an anxious glance at the visitor.

"A—a family matter," he stammered; "I'm afraid I don't understand."

Michael Brasher coughed and stroked his crisp, black beard.

"Well," he said, "it's about an alleged brother-in-law of yours—one Nick or Nicholas Foley, a retired seaman, I am told; a powerful, bullet-headed fellow who has lost an arm."

Caleb Forester pushed away the balance of the meal before him—he had scarcely tasted it.

"Nick Foley is a relation of mine by marriage," was the chemist's answer, "yet for years I have seen little of him, and wish to see less. He has been a rover since boyhood, drinks like a fish, and blusters as if he were a recruiting-sergeant."

The Inspector nodded.

"Mr. Foley asserts that he has but recently come back to Wyresdale," went on Michael Brasher; "within a fortnight or so. Can you give me the exact date of his arrival?"

Caleb started.

"I—I am not aware of that," he faltered, "but as long ago as the—the twenty-second of last month I myself saw him, quite by chance, in the—the evening."

Mr. Brasher made a note of the detail.

"Do you recollect the hour?" queried the Inspector, abstractedly.

"N—no," murmured the chemist; "but it was close on

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midnight. I had been round to the Wheatsheaf Hotel. I have an occasional smoke and glass of claret there, Mr. Brasher."

"An agreeable relaxation," was the calm response; "and by-the-bye, Mr. Forester, when precisely did you happen to pick up this relative of yours? During your return home, I presume it was."

Caleb Forester hesitated. Michael Brasher leaned forward and laid a hand upon the other's coat sleeve.

"Mr. Forester," he observed, "I wish to be your friend, that is, I wish to be more than a friend to your daughter, as you may or may not have suspected. The fact has made me cautious in following the clue which first, in my opinion, connected you with a particular event. Yet duty is duty, and I can do little but provide, for Miss Connie's sake, against wronging you by imperfectly tested conclusions."

The chemist shrank from him, alarmed. Caleb Forester had grown wan and bloodless.

"Now," pursued the Inspector, "I can easily comprehend that you shy at putting the noose round your dead wife's brother's neck. But if, as I infer, you noticed Foley near the cross-roads on the night which was doubtless that of Sir Christopher Dering's murder, it can serve no practical end for you to hold your tongue. Should you not choose to be frank with me I must needs believe you to be an accomplice or an accessory, and treat you as such."

Caleb shuddered and looked askance from side to side of the trim parlour. An atmosphere of his daughter seemed to cling about it. She had laid the table for his belated breakfast; she had set out the flowers which stood on the plaster mantel, and starched the snowy curtains that screened the window. He dare not think of all that Mr. Brasher's threat might mean to him and his.

The grave features of Michael Brasher bent on the chemist a steadfast regard.

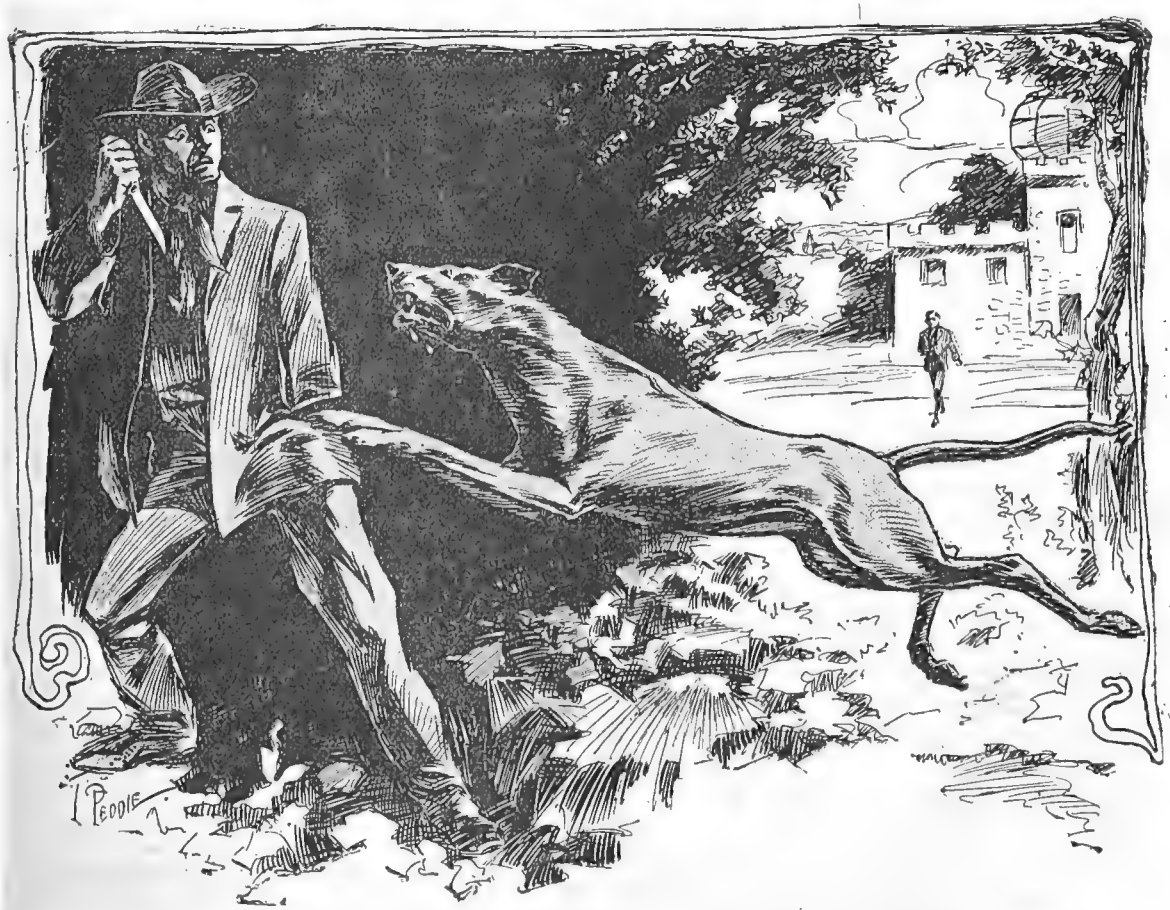
"Am I correct?" demanded the Inspector; "you did see Foley near the cross roads?"

Caleb assented with a sigh and a miserable gesture. "But," he said, "you forget Nicholas has only a single arm—it would have been impossible for him to have——"

Mr. Brasher stowed a leather-bound memorandum-book in his braided skirts.

"It is beyond my province to discuss that," was his curt decision; "let me warn you against referring to the question in any fashion, abroad or to your customers, and especially at the Wheatsheaf."

He reached his cap and prepared to depart, but checked himself, and stepped to Caleb Forester's elbow. The



The mastiff swerved, recoiled, and rushed in again to catch the sailor by the throat.

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chemist had begun to pour a modicum of hot water into the flat, unglazed teapot.

"Oh," said the Inspector, "I gather you spoke at the Wheatsheaf awhile since of some service you had been able to do Mr. Felix Dering. May I ask what it was?"

A crash punctuated Michael Brasher's sentence; the teapot shattered itself on the flagged hearth, distributing wet leaves and ruddy fluid over the rug and the polished stone. Caleb muttered an excuse, and stooped to collect the fragments of earthenware; when he rose his withered countenance was firm and cool.

"Why," he answered, "it was I who recommended him to drop in at the Duchester Theatre while the *Colleen Bawn* was being played. But for going that night he might have returned to Wyresdale; and they do say, Mr. Brasher, if he hadn't had a clear alibi he'd have been arrested instead of poor Spencer, whom people fancy you took to throw the real criminal off his guard."

Michael Brasher shrugged a pair of massive shoulders. "It's a pity the public can't do its own police work," he grumbled; "then it'd learn a thing or two. Good-day, Mr. Forester, and recollect a still tongue makes a wise head. You'll hear from me again."

He twisted the latch, strode out, and descended into the shop. As he passed the counter, with its gleaming bottles and glass cases of puffs and sponges, Mr. Brasher paused to salute the grim form of Archibald Geddes.

"You're an early caller, Inspector," vouchsafed the Scotchman, plying a lump of parcel-wax about the wrapper of a prescription.

Michael Brasher assumed a confidential air.

"I've been endeavouring," he said, "to do Miss Forester a sort of service—candidly, to frighten Mr. Forester off his evenings at the Wheatsheaf. It would be a pity if he were apprehended some night; he gets foolish enough for it."

"You could surely strain a point, for Miss Connie's father," snapped Geddes; "and the old chap's innoffensive, at all events."

"I would strain half a dozen," retorted the Inspector, "but I am not omnipotent in Wyresdale, Mr. Geddes. Perhaps, for Miss Forester's sake, you might keep an eye on Mr. F."

And with this Parthian shot, Michael Brasher gained the High Street.

Geddes stared after him jealously.

"I wonder," growled the Scotchman, "if he's been tapping the governor for permission to approach Connie on the score of marriage. Be hanged to him for a solemn ass. Not such an ass, though; Michael Brasher recognises me for his sworn rival and I've done my best to keep that dark."

Unconscious of Mr. Geddes' indignation at his actual penetration and imagined audacity, the Inspector was threading a series of by-paths towards the narrow lane, where, not far from the lodge gates of Dering House, Nicholas Foley's dilapidated cottage sentinelled the grassy margin of the road.

On the low threshold of his abode sat the sailor himself—a briar pipe between his lips, his chin in his palms, and the characteristic slouch hat thrust to the nape of his neck.

Perceiving that Mr. Brasher halted at the clumsy wicket, Nicholas stretched his limbs, resumed an erect position and sauntered down the path.

"Mornin'," he said, and plucked the briar from his mouth to replenish it; "thought I knew the cut of your jib. Have some baccy," he supplemented, offering his pouch "it's real Virginian leaf, and if you don't make no inquires as to how I got it, I won't tell you no lies. But you'll not have a pull at the likes of it often in your life."

Tempted by the appearance of the tobacco, Michael Brasher accepted a pipeful.

"Didn't seem as if we should hit it when we fouled spars at Wyresdale Park wall a week ago," said the sailor, "but I bear no malice, love you. You found I was right about being allowed to set a few snares up yonder."

"I haven't troubled to ask," replied Mr. Brasher, cheerfully, blowing a fragrant cloud, "I accepted your word for it when I learned you were a kind of kith to Caleb Forester. How do your snares work, by the way?—you should be lucky in Wyresdale Park, Mr. Hare preserves a pile of game. But those big dogs he keeps to scare trespassers must make it wild."

"That'll be why I've done precious little yet," said Nicholas, hiding a grin.

"Not easy to set a snare one-handed?" suggested the Inspector, designedly. Nicholas showed a rugged fist.

"I'm not as gammy as I look," he observed, "my five fingers are as useful as your ten, I'll go bail."

"When it comes to tying a knot," demurred Michael Brasher.

The sailor bared his teeth. "These help me out," was his answer, "there ain't many knots I can't do and undo, thread, line and rope."

Brasher fumbled in his pockets.

"I don't mean to argue I dispute your ability," declared the Inspector, "but do you mind my seeing how you contrive; I'd no idea, with your affliction, you could be so smart. No," he broke off, ceasing to rummage, "I've not a bit of string. But a handkerchief might do?"

He produced the article as he spoke, a species of suspense revealing itself in his demeanour. Nicholas Foley seized it, placed an extremity between his teeth, shifted his grip once or twice and, lo, the wisp of linen was knotted into a circle.

"Marvellous!" cried Mr. Brasher; "and what a palm you have—as strong as a gorilla's, you could smash every bone in mine, I guess."

The guileful Inspector extended his arm seductively. Nicholas clutched and squeezed the proffered fingers; his grasp was that of a steel vice.

"Incredible!" ejaculated Michael Brasher; "Mr. Foley, you are a miracle. As a two-handed person I envy you your single one. Thanks for the tobacco, which is all you claim for it. I am due at the station now, but I shall hope to improve your acquaintance."

The sailor waved a flattered adieu with his briar, and Mr. Brasher walked off.

"It's a pretty clue," he said to himself, "but the case is incomplete. Sir Christopher was suffocated by a knotted bandanna, after being stunned by a blow. Forester can prove this fellow to have been near the spot at the time, and he is obviously capable in a physical sense, of the deed. But would that convict him? No, I must root out some more evidence, and then, then for a big success, and possibly a London berth."

Lost in ambitious dreams, he proceeded on his way. He had just rounded the corner of a transverse by-path which shortened the route to the police-depôt, when there stopped at the wicket of the sailor's garden, a small, shrewd lad, clothed with a blue uniform, ornamented by a brass badge and buttons. The new arrival carried a heavy wooden box.

"Can you tell me the road to Wyresdale Park?" he inquired, his accent a pronounced Cockney.

Nicholas surveyed him critically—the lad was a pleasant, red-cheeked youngster. "What ship are you middy of, my cherub?" rejoined the sailor.

The boy deposited his load cautiously. It was a deal casket, three and a quarter feet by eighteen inches, and half as many deep. The lid, pierced with several apertures,

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"I owe respect to all women; one only has my heart, and that woman—pardon my frankness, Miss Garland—is not you."

the size of a sixpence, allowed to be seen, at the bottom of these ventilators, a perforated metal lining. The whole of the box was bound by broad bands of tape, lavishly sealed, and supplementing its component nails and screws. On it was a label, addressed in bold written characters.

THIS SIDE UP: WITH GREAT CARE. ZOOLOGICAL SPECIMEN, ALIVE.

OTTO HARE, ESQ.,
WYRESDALE PARK,
WYRESDALE, DERBYSHIRE.

"I'm a messenger boy, from London," said the bearer of this coffer, gazing curiously at the one-armed sailor, and noting, with a boyish instinct for the romance of the sea, his tattooed wrist and tanned skin.

Nicholas drew the wicket ajar, rolled through, and lifted the box. "I'm steering that course," he announced, "and you are dead beat, my lad. I'll give you a convoy. Come on—it's just a few cables-length off."

The messenger yielded, and they went on together up the lane. Foley was surreptitiously weighing and shaking the box, but no sound emerged to slake or to whet his inquisitiveness.

"It's a decent distance to send a nest of snakes by a nipper like you," he ventured; "or is it a baby alligator?"

"I don't know what's in the thing," answered the youngster, wiping the perspiration from his brow. "I was to bring it as fast as I could. A hansom to St. Pancras, and second-class fare all the way."

"I reckon them dealers charge the swells any price they choose," pursued Nicholas; "was this out of Jamrach's? I've sold him an odd monkey or so, and a 'strictor or two, in my time."

"It wasn't a dealer that sent me," said the boy, innocently; "I fetched it from a hotel. A gentleman rang up for a messenger to go to Derbyshire with a valuable box, and I was told to take it. A tall, fat gentleman he was—a foreigner—and gave me a sovereign for myself."

Foley whistled. "Kraft," he muttered, and rolled on in silence, still poising the casket critically. His next device was to sniff at it; but the only result appeared to be a discontented shake of the head. Then he listened at the ventilator-holes.

The lad fidgeted. "'Arf time with that," he said. "I was to carry it quite level. You'll be getting me into

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trouble. I'll take it now, if you don't mind—I'm a lot rested, thank you," he added, softening.

Nicholas returned the box. They were at the extremity of the fine avenue that led to Otto Hare's classic white mansion.

"Bear straight ahead," he instructed, "and you'll twig it. So-long, my lad. You're a trump to obey orders, and you musn't mind an old sailor's freedom."

Colouring at his elder's apology, the messenger pressed forward, and was soon out of sight. Nicholas, left to himself, meditated—and scratched his ear. Suddenly his reflective countenance was illuminated by a broad smile. He slapped his thigh and set off running.

A quick trot brought him to the convenient bough which overhung the park wall. He climbed in and hurried through the plantation to the skirt of the rounded hill where stood the singular tower and the fort-like structure on which he had concentrated such an obstinate attention.

Partially screened by a dense thicket, he kneeled down and examined the turf in front of him. It undulated slightly, and betrayed signs of recent displacement.

Nicholas wrinkled his forehead, then pulled out his clasp-knife, adjusted the blade, and began to dig. He had struck upon the exact spot where, some days before, those shadowy figures from the tower had been interrupted in their unexplained task by the breaking of the branch that had secretly served Nicholas Foley as a means of espionage.

While the sailor worked, a small form emerged stealthily from the door in the base of the tower. Its masculine outlines and scrupulous morning costume marked it for that of the Golden Dwarf. Otto Hare clutched by the collar a great liver-hued mastiff.

Picking up a stone, he tossed it lightly in the direction of the thicket that hid the operations of the sailor. The dog darted after it with a fierce bellow. Foley leapt up, startled. The mastiff swerved, recoiled, and rushed in again, to catch the sailor by the throat. The clasp-knife fell from Nicholas's grasp as he reeled back. He struggled to thrust his thumb into an eye of the creature, but the brute bore him to the ground and worried him.

A moment the Golden Dwarf watched the fight. When he whistled off the dog, Foley remained motionless, the blood streaming from his neck.

A grim smile distorted the Dwarf's face, and he strode away, followed by the reluctant mastiff. The beast's jaws and gleaming fangs were stained by gouts of crimson fluid.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"That Woman is not You."

"My darling, do not weep so; you will break my heart. And I have never had more need of all my strength and determination. Let me see you smile once—if only to give me courage—or I shall be sorry I met Barbara and asked her to tell you I would be here."

Esther Carew raised her golden head; it had been lying on her folded arms, which were supported by the end of the rustic seat in the Rosery garden.

Her blue eyes were limpid, her fair cheeks wet with tears.

"You don't understand, Felix," she said; "it must be all over between us. For your sake it must."

Felix Dering put a palm on the clustered curls and drew them from Esther's white brow. "Poor child," he murmured; "you are frightened, I can read it in your face. What is the matter?"

Esther gathered his firm fingers in her own tender ones, a terrified glow had dilated her sensitive pupils.

"Dearest," she whispered; "Mr. Hare knows about your—your coming back to Wyresdale that evening; oh, I kept your secret, he did not learn it from me. But he says he could do you an ill-turn and would, if he thought—forgive me, dearest—if he thought you continued to insult me with your attentions."

Her lover started and clenched a brown hand.

"The little asp!" he cried; "so his plan is, by threatening me, to force you into accepting him. But I will spoil the plot, and in a way he does not look for. I will ask Brasher to arrest me, and take my trial like a man. Why should I fear, I am guiltless. Whatever happens, then, you will be free of the Golden Dwarf—he has no hold over you except through me."

Esther sprang and clung to him. "Don't dream of it," she cried; "don't dream of it—I should go mad if you were in prison. Felix, they might kill you, the law sometimes makes mistakes. I couldn't bear the suspense."

Felix clasped her to his breast. "I wish I had never knit our destinies together," he muttered huskily. "Be brave, dear; I cannot protect myself from Hare's vindictiveness by allowing you to tolerate his overtures. But, tell me, did he openly assert his power to prove my presence in Wyresdale on the night of my uncle's death?"

"N—no," faltered Esther; "it was Dr. Kraft who warned me Mr. Hare could do that. Mr. Hare only hinted."

"Dr. Kraft!" exclaimed Felix amazed. "He and the Golden Dwarf are inseparable. Esther, this means mischief of some sort, and I will fathom it. Yet have no alarm on my account; it is not enough to show that I was at Wyresdale on a certain occasion. If Mr. Hare does no more he cannot harrass me much. There is, to be honest, another who may cause me still greater trouble."

He was silent, pondering. "Esther," he said at length, "a malignant fate has hemmed me round with dangers, and I myself am offered—tactfully, skilfully, vaguely—dishonourable terms of escape. I shall not accept them. While I live you are the one woman in the world for me, and rather than prove false, or lose you through cowardice, I would mount the scaffold or enter the convict's cell."

The girl shivered. Her lover's words were deliberate and significant.

Felix stooped and kissed her lips. "Believe in me always, dear," he said; "I will not, as I have been urged to, fly from those who attack me, nor will I fight, if I can help it, a losing battle! And now, good-bye for the present. But, till I bid you, do not abandon hope."

Esther choked down a sob. "You won't leave me a second week with no sign of your existence," she pleaded. "Not that it would be the slightest use asking you to call; mamma wouldn't be at home if you did."

Felix sighed. "I could not think how to get speech of you," he rejoined, "and, indeed, I have been too miserable to bear even your sweet society. If it were not the trick of a poltroon, Esther, I would terminate the imbroglio by a merciful bullet."

A soft clasp stole about Felix Dering's neck, and a pair of piteous orbs looked into his. Felix answered their mute appeal.

"No," he said; "I will not do it—they may hang me if they like. I will die an innocent gentleman, and not a suicide."

He considered a moment.

"You recollect the old hawthorn at the top of the strawberry-bed," he added, "where the robins built last year?"

Esther nodded: she could not speak, the phrase recalled memories of a happy summer, before the shadow of a twin crime had banished the joy of their young romance.

"In the hole at the root," promised Felix, "I will put you a letter twice a week—I can reach it at night from the paddock. And you must post me notes the same way. Farewell, dearest."

Felix snatched a last embrace, and, not daring to glance back, stepped through the hawthorn hedge.

Look out for when Hazel Harlow visits your town.

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From the Rosery he turned towards the High Street, strode along its drowsy avenue of shops and entered that of Caleb Forester. Archibald Geddes was behind the counter, his sober countenance bent over the pages of a book—the Scotchman was an indefatigable student. Relinquishing his volume, he looked up; Felix and he had not met since that Sunday when they had contemplated the dismantled window of the strong-room at the police-station, and the chemist's assistant had shown himself so oddly critical of his companion.

"Good morning, sir," said the Scotchman, and waited for the other to speak.

Felix acknowledged the salutation.

"I want to buy or to borrow a magnifying lens, Geddes," he explained; "do you stock such articles?"

Archibald Geddes twisted his thick moustache. "N-no," was his rejoinder; "but I can lend you a decent one I have by me. I use it for botanical purposes."

The Scotchman had recourse to a drawer, produced the lens in its nickel frame, and held it over his thumb. It was a rather powerful glass—enlarging twenty or thirty times.

Felix thanked the owner and accepted the proffered loan of the instrument.

"I will restore it in a day or two," he added.

Geddes wrapped up the glass.

"No word of little Sir Brian yet?" asked the chemist's assistant, passing it across.

"None," responded Felix; "I quite realise what Wyresdale folk think of me, Geddes—you may share their suspicions, for anything I know."

The Scotchman coughed.

"I don't say, Mr. Dering," he conceded, "I find it easy to look upon you in the light of a child-stealer."

Felix put away the borrowed lens and moved to the door.

"I am glad of that," was his melancholy comment; "I imagine, some fine day, Geddes, you'll not regret having tried to think well of me."

He paused for an answer, but as the Scotchman preserved a judicious reticence, took his departure.

Through the hot sunbeams he strode on, by the small and winding roads of the place, to the lodge-gates of Dering House. His shoulders stooped and his head was bowed upon his chest like that of a greybeard. Vainly he strove with the difficulties of his situation—to remain passive seemed madness, to act was to court ruin.

Mechanically he gained the terrace and entered the lofty hall. In the embayed window commanding the lawn, sat Judith Garland. The lustre of the yellow noon picked her out as a handsome silhouette against the panes of the recess.

She rose and came to him—her black train rustled on the polished oak of the floor.

"Ah," she murmured, with the daring affectation of a mutual intelligence that had grown habitual to her in his presence; "I was waiting for you. I couldn't resist your pathetic demeanour during the past week. But Lady Dering has positively tied me to her apron-string. Never mind, we will have our deferred *tête-à-tête* now. Where shall we go—into the conservatory."

The net of her audacious and unwomanly wooing had been well woven, and strengthened by the perception that his life and honour lay, to a mysterious extent, in her power—it had paralysed Felix Dering too long.

He faced her determinedly. "Miss Garland," he said, "I must confess myself at a loss to comprehend this persistent tone on your part. But I should be culpable were I to risk your misinterpretation of my tolerance. I owe respect to all women, one only has my heart, and that woman—pardon my frankness, Miss Garland—is not you."

Judith gasped, and put her hand to her side; a real pang had stricken her at the failure of her immodest plot to entrap him.

"Fool!" she snarled, "and I would have saved you—I would have smoothed the way for you to take my assistance—and my love. You fling me off; then beware, beware! You shall suffer as I suffer."

And darting by him, she vanished in the gloom of the great staircase.

Felix drew a deep breath—the die was cast! He lingered a moment, before gaining his own chamber by the other side of the double flight. There he unwrapped the lens he had borrowed from Geddes, and, out of a locked cabinet, produced the Malacca hunting-crop that had been the dead St. Christopher's.

He poised the glass above the extremity where he had discovered the scratched characters. Without the lens he had been able to read a mutilated sentence, meaning little, yet suggesting much. What would the glass reveal?

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Trail to the Wall.

"So you have been to Paris for a holiday, Mr. Neal Garland? Thanks to the small token of esteem which I presented to you on my last visit, no doubt. Well, I have nothing to say against that. But why did you come back, to-day of all days, and telegraph to my hotel you must see me?"

"Why?" repeated Neal, throwing one leg over the other as he lounged on the corner of the table in Keturah Schwartz's dingy upper parlour, by the ponderous figure of the stout woman herself. "Because you've been here trying to pick Mrs. Schwartz's brains, and I won't have it. I made a bargain with you, and I'll stick to it. But you keep your own side of the fence."

"If you allude," said Dr. Kraft, calmly, "to the fact that I called to ask Mrs. Schwartz about a child I noticed in this house some while ago, I admit the imputation, though I do not comprehend for what reason you have caused me the inconvenience to break a journey North and travel to Pimlico when I was bound for Derbyshire under most important circumstances. Nor do I allow myself to be inconvenienced without making people suffer for it."

And the German smiled cruelly at the odd couple who sat opposite him.

"The reason is," snarled Neal, "you've been on the prowl, and we'll not stand it. We know too much about you for your good, Dr. Kraft, and if you're wise you won't threaten us."

Joseph Kraft's yellow eyes flashed behind his glasses. He gazed thoughtfully out of the window. It was a dull afternoon in Pimlico; the panes were splashed with shower drops.

"Let us exchange information," he said. "Now, I am aware you have certain quite respectable connections, Mr. Garland; that your sister is companion to a Lady Dering, of Wyresdale Park."

The German launched a quick scrutiny at Neal Garland, on whom bewilderment had laid an unmistakeable grip.

"You've been on the prowl there, too, have you?" hissed Neal; "anything else, Dr. Joseph Kraft?"

"Yes," said Kraft; "she is ashamed of you—she denies your existence."

"Ho, ho!" broke out Keturah Schwartz; "I like her impudence."

"Shut up, Keturah!" commanded her peculiar lodger; "come, Kraft, how does my having a sister affect my hold over you or your hold over me?"

Kraft was nonplussed; he had put down a tramp card and had been overtrumped.

"Who told you she was my sister?" proceeded Neal; "let's get at the bottom of your prowling. There was

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none aware of it in Wyresdale—except——" he broke off ——"except Foley. Curse him, has he been blabbing?"

An expression of mixed incredulity and alarm flashed across the German's smooth visage. An instant later it regained its humourous cynicism.

"Do not blame your Foley, whoever he may be," said Joseph Kraft, smiling the thin, false smile characteristic of him; "I heard the name by chance, interviewed the lady, and observed the likeness. You gather that I am curious about you, Mr. Garland. Grant it; I have discovered in you the proverbial weasel; I will not hope to catch you asleep."

He got up out of his chair.

"You score, Mr. Garland," he conceded; "since you enter an objection to my inquiries about the child, I will not pursue them. An acquaintance of mine—abroad—desired such a little boy to adopt. But it is of no moment—no moment whatever."

The German brushed the loose sleeve of his frock-coat against his hat—a broad-brimmed silk on this occasion had displaced his soft straw.

"By the way," he added, "if I should want you to convince a certain person—a—a young lady—of Mr. Felix Dering's presence in Wyresdale on a particular night, you could run down, for a consideration, as per our agreement?"

Neal glanced at Mrs. Schwartz, who wrinkled her brows warningly. Joseph Kraft tapped the crown of his hat.

"The consideration," he murmured, "would be substantial."

"I'll be there when I'm required," growled Neal; "and woe betide you, Kraft, if you play any dogs-trick on me."

"I am as guileless as a—a newly-arrived infant," said the German.

He bowed to Keturah Schwartz, nodded cheerfully to Neal, and stepped out of the creaking door with so much address they did not hear him go.

In the squalid thoroughfare beneath, Joseph Kraft's mild self-possession vanished. His saffron pupils contracted, his mouth set, his nostrils drew together. Ferocity was stamped on every line of his features.

"The world is too small, curse it!" he cried; "else how should they have met Foley. The combination is dangerous—I must break it, and without delay. Foley, my friend, you had better have stopped out of Wyresdale. And Mr. Neal Garland, too—but he is useful for the moment. Sakerment, how many flies there are to buzz about such a man as I! Well, they must be crushed, one by one."

He hailed a cab, which swayed under his weight as he mounted into it, and gave the order, "St. Pancras."

At the Midland depot a commissionaire met him with his bag; the German took a ticket, boarded his train, and was whirled Northwards.

It was night when he reached Wyresdale. He left his bag at the station and walked down, under a harvest moon, to the park. Entering by the iron wicket near the tower, he started—his hand had touched something moist and adhesive. Joseph Kraft scanned his finger-tips—they were reddened. The bars of the gate bore clotting smears of a crimson substance—they spattered the wall above and the road outside.

The German pursed his lips and looked about for the continuation of the crimson drops—they stopped suddenly on the earthern kerb. He studied the turf beyond the wicket—there was a distinct trail; he pursued it backwards into the park. *(To be continued.)*

THE STOLEN SKYSCRAPER.

For seven years and a half it remained the most stupendous of mysteries—that perplexing and incredible event which took place on the night of the 28th of June, 1891. Black magic seemed the only possible explanation, and, except those who are Theosophists, we do not believe in black magic any more. I know of two persons, at least, who became violently insane over that night's happenings—or, rather, I suppose their growing madness was precipitated by the event, and in my professional experience I encountered not less than a score of deaths which were indirectly due to the same cause. This is, of course, besides the lives that disappeared utterly with the great office buildings.

The building was known as the "Morrison," and it was the first of the modern iron sky-scrapers to be put up in the South. It stood sixteen stories, or 235 feet high, and occupied a ground space of ninety-seven feet by eighty. It was constructed with a steel skeleton of especial rigidity, covered with the usual shell of brick and terra-cotta, while the first two floors were handsomely finished in stone. Next to it on one side was a paved area, used in connection with a tobacco warehouse; on the other side, and separated by a wide drive, was the Brown Bros. building looking flat and squat beside its towering neighbour. At the rear of the sky-scraper ran a twenty-foot alley.

The erection of the monster was not by any means an operation of pacific industry. Arthur John Morrison, the president of the syndicate which was to put up the building, was well known as an uncompromising and bitter opponent of labour unionism in every form, and it was owing to his influence and assistance that the Cummings lock-out had been persisted in, the year before, to the strikers' discomfiture.

His was a name hated in lodge-rooms, and, as the consequence, the men, while accepting his work, did so with an aggressive spirit of independence, keenly alive for any action that might be constructed into bullying or injustice.

Mr. Morrison had not chosen to let out the work by contract, but was seeing it through himself, and, whether or not he was aware of the feeling among his men, his conduct was certainly not conciliatory. It became known that he was getting his steel girders from the Boekh Iron Co., which was at that time warring with the Amalgamated Brotherhood of Iron and Steel Workers, and a deputation of this order employed upon the building went to remonstrate with him. Mr. Morrison not only refused to listen to what he termed their "dictation," but ordered his foreman to "give these men their time" at once, and to engage others.

This was a declaration of war, and at once every iron-worker, riveter, fitter, and machinist took up his dinner pail and marched home, leaving the half-completed framework looking like an army of dissipated gibbets.

The president not only declined to reinstate the discharged men, but announced his intention of completing his building by the use of "scabs," and in view of the enormity of this conduct, a sympathetic strike was

Hazel Harlow's adventures grow more exciting every week.

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ordered by the stone and brick masons and the other unions concerned. Mr. Morrison thereupon instructed his foreman to engage none but non-union labour, and as there was an insufficient supply of this at hand, he imported it from Pennsylvania and New York.

This action aroused the greatest indignation among the strikers and caused a series of small riots which lasted till the completion of the building. On more than one occasion an armed mob attempted to intimidate the imported workmen from landing from the train; one day a high scaffolding fell with three men, and it was rumoured that the ropes had been cut by the strikers. A little later the crowds assumed so threatening an attitude around the big building that the mayor read the riot act and called out half a battalion of military. Happily no lives were lost in the fracas that followed, and the disturbance was smothered though not exactly quieted; but day after day the petty war continued in spite of mayor and police. Under such circumstances the work did not progress with much rapidity, and it was not until the 8th of April, 1891, that the last of the painters and decorators left the completed building.

To the union men it seemed an additional insult that the building should be called by their enemy's name, but as the "Morrison Building" it was opened on April 24th, and the Bank of Kentucky immediately established its headquarters on the ground floor, offices were quickly let upon the other floors, and though no union elevator man, machinist, or electrician could be induced to work in the building, yet men were found for these posts, and the enterprise seemed to promise every success.

On the night of June 28th. there were many complaints received at the electric light station of defective circuiting and unlighted lamps. Policeman No. 37 passing along his beat in the business portion of the town about one o'clock found that quarter in almost complete darkness.

It was a moonless, cloudy night, and as the officer looked up the unlighted bulk of the Morrison Building could not even be discerned against the black sky. As he approached this edifice, wondering a little at the absence of light, he was suddenly felled by a crashing blow on the back of the head, and he knew no more till he revived in the hospital fifty hours later.

A few minutes after, a sensible tremor of the earth was felt by almost every inhabitant of the city, asleep or awake, and this was instantly followed by a smothered low-toned roar indescribably vast in volume, but dulled as if by distance. The sound was so vague in quality that it was impossible to locate it, but it was so impressive that most persons ascribed it to an earthquake, and many sat up all night in expectation of a second shock. They were certainly justified in their apprehension, for the seismometer at the observatory registered a very considerable vibration.

The few watchmen and night hands, who were almost alone in the down-town city, were most affected by the shock, but the sound appeared so distant that, as no damage was done, none of them went far beyond their doors to investigate in the inky darkness. They supposed it to be an earthquake, since there was absolutely no blast such as must have accompanied a heavy explosion.

But with the earliest dawn the amazing truth stood revealed. The stately building that had towered over the city towered no more. From a distance it might have been supposed that it had collapsed in the night, but it was not so.

An early workman was the first to discover the fact that the Morrison Building was gone bodily, actually spirited away, with not so much as a brick left behind. Where it had stood the ground was level and smooth as the ordinary neglected vacant city lot, strewn with sticks and stones and an occasional rusty tin can.

The man put both hands to his head, in horrid fear that his brain was going. The other buildings stood undisturbed around, the early sun shone clear, a distant clock struck five. Everything was natural and as it should be, except that terribly incomprehensible vacancy.

Two or three other men now appeared on the spot, and they likewise stood petrified with sheer amazement. It is a dreadful thing, and near akin to madness, when you chance upon something that the brain positively refuses to accept in spite of the testimony of the senses. Some approached the spot and poked about cautiously in the air, vaguely fancying that in some mysterious way the building might have become invisible; but there was nothing but thin air.

The excitement of that day was a thing never to be forgotten in the city. All business was suspended, and vast crowds besieged the place, so that a double cordon of ropes and policemen was necessary to keep them back.

The sand-bagged officer had been discovered before this, and no less than five other persons were found in exactly similar condition—all insensible from blows on the skull, and the whole six were found within two hundred yards of each other.

On their recovery not one was able to throw any light on the mystery, and they told an exactly uniform story of having been struck down by an unseen force. Meanwhile the hard-packed clay where the sky-scraper had stood was carefully examined by the municipal authorities and some excavations were undertaken, but there were no traces of even the foundations. The missing building seemed torn out by the roots.

The insurance companies refused to pay policies on the lost building, alleging very plausibly that there was no proof of its destruction, but at the same time the rates of insurance on real estate were raised throughout the city. It was a period of panic for property-holders, and indeed for everyone. The terrible mystery of the whole affair was a thing to prey on the mind, and it was about this time that two women became violently insane unquestionably owing to the prevailing high nervous tension.

A great many persons left the city, and nervous prostration became almost epidemic. A fact afterwards remarked was that the consumption of liquors increased nearly 200 per cent in the week following the disappearance.

Meanwhile the most energetic efforts were being made to solve the mystery. The city offered a reward of 5,000 dollars for the correct explanation, and the Bank of Kentucky, which had lost nearly a quarter of a million in its vanished vaults, supplemented this offer by 10,000 dollars more. Excavations were made to the depth of fifteen or twenty feet where the building had stood without finding the slightest indication that the ground had ever been before disturbed.

Detectives and scientists were equally at a loss. It was suspected that prominent labour chieftains might know something of the secret, but nothing could be gained by this suspicion, for the mode of operation

Next week "Hazel Harlow in Newcastle."

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could not even be guessed at. The newspapers at last put forward a suggestion that the entire city had been hypnotised by some unknown agency and that the building was really there all the time, and this absurd theory was for some weeks discussed with the greatest seriousness.

At last, and very gradually, the excitement subsided, for the strain was in the truth too great for the public to endure. A gubernatorial election in the fall helped to distract attention, and the mystery never quite recovered its grip. From time to time there have been tentative explanations put forth, but no satisfactory one, and this is almost wonderful since, as I know, there were no less than 350 men in the United States who were in the secret. But that secret remained a secret—up to this day.

Last year I was employed as a volunteer surgeon at the notorious Camp Wykoff, and there I came in contact with a private of volunteers (I do not care to mention the regiment) who was gradually dying of necrosis. He was plainly a man of education and of unusual force—of a rather unscrupulous character, I should judge, but his conversation was interesting, and we came to talk together a good deal. I was able to perform some small services for him, for which he conceived himself under a disproportionate debt of gratitude, and one day he said to me rather drily:

"I can't pay you, doctor, for your kindness, and I can't leave you anything——"

"Don't talk nonsense, Dan!" I said rather brusquely.

"But I can tell you what became of the Morrison Building if you would like to know. I used to see you around the place at that time."

He told me that evening in the great dim hospital tent, where the mingled odours of iodine and tobacco smoke made the hot summer air unbearable.

"I was a workman then in a large labour union," he said, "and I was in the councils of the big chiefs enough to know that they were ready to do almost anything to get even with that man Morrison, and, in fact, we all felt that way. It wasn't the cash in the bank that tempted them, though they didn't let that waste away when it came their way. I don't know who invented the scheme but I believe somebody found out about the cave and they worked it out from that.

"It seems that there is a long cavern running under the place, so that about half the town stands on a shell of earth from thirty to fifty feet thick. This cave is geologically like the Luray Cavern in Virginia and the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, and it can be entered at a point some miles outside the town. The first I heard of the scheme was when I was ordered from headquarters to hire a hundred of the most reliable union men I knew for secret work at a dollar an hour. Then came a man from New York to show us what to do. We bought an old warehouse a block away from the Morrison Building, and, beginning in the cellar, we tunnelled toward the sky-scraper like a lot of bank robbers.

"I was foreman and had a hundred men under me, but they worked in shifts an hour long, ten men to the shift. We used to cut shafts right down to the top of the cave to drop our dirt out of the way, and it used to make us nervous to see that black gulf down below. But it wasn't long before the union had men working down there too, as we found later.

"In the course of ten days we got under the big structure and our engineers marked out its sides for us. In ten days more we had all the earth under the foundations completely honeycombed with tunnels, so that it seemed as if it must cave in upon us. But the engineers had calculated the strain to a ton, and knew just how far to go. Towards the last we didn't drop the earth through, but stored it up in big cross galleries cut away from under the foundations.

"The shell of earth was, I remember, just about thirty-seven feet thick, the cave below was 270 feet deep, and the building was 235 feet high. Now, while we were tunnelling, a gang of 200 men was working below by the light of great fires. They had heaped a great pile of packed earth forty or fifty feet high, and placed with mathematical exactitude perpendicularly under the position of the building. We could see the light of their fires far, far down in the darkness, when we looked through our dump shafts.

"All was finished by the middle of June; but we waited a couple of weeks for a dark night, and it came on the 28th. We had placed a dozen light charges of rack-a-rock, attached to an electric-light wire, in the tunnels under the big building, and all our men were out of danger and ready for business. We had cut the electric light wires leading to that part of the city, and we had two dozen men with "life-preservers" stationed all round the block instructed to knock down senseless anyone who came near.

"At a little after one we touched it off. There was a very slight explosion, then a dull, rending roar as the giant building broke through its foundation. It was too dark for us to see it; we could only hear the appalling rush of its descent. Yet it seemed to go down slowly, for the sides of the hole were barely large enough to permit its passage, though no doubt our nerves greatly exaggerated the time. Probably it was not more than fifteen seconds before an earthshaking jar announced that it had reached the bed prepared for it at the bottom. In its new position a few feet of its top remained in the bottom of the hole, completely plugging it, while the large chimney reached nearly to the ground level.

"In an instant we were all at work. The big chimney was broken off and the loose earth we had stored was hoisted up with inconceivable rapidity, emptied into the cavity, and packed hard. There were 200 men at work by the light of dark lanterns close to the ground, and with no more noise than a low-toned hum that could not have been heard a hundred yards off. When the hole was filled up and packed down hard we scattered over it a cart-load of rubbish—and the thing was done. It had taken just one hour and thirty-five minutes after firing the shock.

"The strongly-constructed steel frame of the building had prevented it from collapsing, but I heard that it was frightfully twisted and bent. There were three men in it at the time, killed, of course. Half the money found in the bank was divided among us, and the other half went into the fund for the support of strikes. I got £60 as my share.

"After the job was done we got together and took a solemn oath of secrecy, and I believe that it has been faithfully kept till now. All I ask is that you will say nothing till after I am dead. It has been a mystery long enough; it is time that the Morrison gang should learn what was the power that did the thing."

I did not have to wait long, for he died thirteen days later. He gave me no names, and I have revealed none.

Look out for when Hazel Harlow visits your town.

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GENTLEMAN PETE.

UNKEMPT—in rags—unutterably wretched.

This was Pete; a vagabond of vagabonds.

In all London none more lost than he, to all sense of personal responsibility and right-doing.

Wretched, did I say? Well, there were times when he seemed and appeared to be as happy as the proverbial sandboy. I venture to think, however, that these moments were rare.

There is not much happiness (of the true sort, I mean) to be found in the gutter, and the gutter it was, that served as Pete's hunting-ground for the article.

His favourite play-place (for he never did work of any kind) was under one or other of the railway arches that span the network of mean streets on the south side of the river. Here would he loaf by the hour together, and generally alone. He was anything but a gregarious child (his age, I fancy, at this particular period was about ten), loving his own society above everything, and giving no encouragement to would-be companions of his own kidney. How he lived was a mystery, though I very much fear that somebody suffered whenever he repleted.

There was a certain big policeman in the neighbourhood (that of the "Elephant and Castle") who knew more about him than a good many.

This man declared it to be his conviction that Pete, though living in a perpetual state of temptation, owing to circumstances, was nevertheless an honest boy—a good boy. This spoke volumes, as coming from a policeman, who, as a rule, are more often than not given to the indulgence of hard thoughts, where such as Pete are concerned.

But that which probably contributed more than anything else, to make the lad a bit of a pet, so to speak, with C 29 was his gentleness, his patient contentedness, his natural good breeding, which, hot or cold, wet weather or fine, always showed to advantage in his dealings (social, not commercial) with people generally.

This was the origin of his nickname, "Gentleman," which was first given him by "C 29." It leaking out, as such things, even the most ordinary, will do, he became, generally, in fact exclusively, known by it in his little circle, both socially and officially. As "Gentleman Pete," therefore, he was, in his little way, a more or less local celebrity.

Pete and his "blue" friend were on such terms that a morning conversation, when "duty" permitted, was the regular thing, and relished, I verily believe, quite as much by one as by the other.

"No, I aint 'ticler 'ungry," said Pete, one wet, cold, miserable morning in November, "leastways not very. Roun' the Boro' Markit, I were, 'afore six. I knows a cove there, a toff as sells things, 'taters, an' greenses, an' —an' turmits—'e guv me a 'doorstep' an' a 'aporth o' tea. I'm orl right." And Pete, to prove his contention, did a "breakdown," with a "cartwheel" as a wind-up.

"Don't look it," remarked C 29 slowly. "Look here, Pete, you just run to No. 1 Smith Street, second turning to the left along the Walworth Road, knock two knocks, and tell my missus I sent you for a bit o' breakfast. Hold hard! I'll put it on a bit o' paper."

The kind-hearted chap wrote a few words on a leaf of his note-book, tore it out, and gave it to Pete, who darted off with it at the "double."

That afternoon, when Constable Jessup went off duty, thoughts of his little friend pressed upon him, to the exclusion of everything else.

It was the same when he sat down to his tea, Mrs. Jessup at length noticing his abstraction, and questioning him as to the cause.

"Can't shake that youngster Pete out of my head," he said, musingly, to his wife in reply to her inquiries. "There seems something wrong about him this last day or two, and, for the life o' me, I can't make it out."

"Pete," said his wife, "is that the boy you sent round here this morning?"

"Yes, that's him."

"Poor little mite. Why, he's all skin-and-bone, Dick. Who, in pity's name, looks after him?"

"Nobody. The street's his home, his mother, and—all he's got."

"Then all I can say is, as it's a sin and a shame as folks as has got tons o' money, and only spends it on their own backs and stummicks, and on making theirselves comfortable, don't do something real good for the poor little street kiddies. I tell you, Dick, I cried my eyes out this morning after the little un' had gone, he did look so dirty, and so as if he wanted a mother!"

"Well," said Dick, "all the talk in the world won't alter things, and selfish gentlefolks 'll go on dancing, and dining, and Monte-Carloing, in spite of all we can say, and in spite of all the little 'uns in London as hasn't a shelter or a rag to cover 'em."

"I'm afraid that's about it," said Mrs. Jessup sorrowfully, "but I do think that if, instead of them giving, as these big people now and again do, so much to libraries, churches, and hospitals, they would take a few of these children in trust for God A'mighty, as gave 'em their money, they'd do more good in six months to make things a little more like 'kingdom come' than ever they will by all the libraries and churches as was ever built!"

"Right you are, Nell," said Dick, "but, meantime, I want to get to the bottom of this mystery of Pete's. P'raps it'll come to me when I'm in bed," and Dick Jessup went to bed accordingly.

His wife by-and-by called out to him, the doors of the two rooms being both half open:

"Dick! I gave the boy that jacket—you know the one I mean—our little Dick's."

"I know—did you?" responded "big" Dick in muffled tones from under the clothes. "I'm glad; it's doing more good than lying idle away there in the drawer."

Dick Jessup and his wife had no children now; the only one, a boy, they had ever had having died when about eight years old, eighteen months before.

It was this which certainly made the lonely mother's heart to be so full of sympathy and tender pity for the little waif whom she had seen that morning for the first time.

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She longed to do something for "Gentleman," and when Dick went on duty the next day she set her woman's wit to work to scheme out a plan whereby she could benefit the child.

Shame on you! men and women at ease! Here was a poor, hard-working sister of yours, possessed of about as much "gear" as would serve the majority of you for "scent" and "cigarettes," seeking for some way to do that which you, with all your money and opportunities, never give even a thought to doing. An example to you *now*, depend upon it, she will be a damning witness against you at the great trial of souls!

Next morning C 29 sought the particular arch usually affected by Pete at that hour.

He was not there!

"Rum! he's never hardly missed being here before. I'm getting right down uneasy about it. Well, it's come to something when the likes o' me worrits myself so about the likes o' him. But I can't help it. P'raps he'll turn up later on—we'll see."

But he didn't. "Gentleman Pete," for the time being at any rate, was not to be found.

Then a strange thing happened.

In the afternoon, on his way home from the station, just when he had passed under the railway arch which spans Walworth Road, he was conscious of a touch on his coat, from behind.

Quickly turning, he sees poor "Gentleman"—gasping, white, and, although it was raining hard, and very cold, in his apology for a shirt, with bare feet, and his hair lank and dripping with water.

"Where's your coat?" asked the constable, catching hold of the boy by the shoulder, and speaking a trifle severely. "Where's the coat as my missus give you yesterday?"

"Please, 'twenty-nine'" (he always called his big friend "twenty-nine"), "they've tuk it away; an' me trotter-cases; an' they'd 'ave tuk my 'britches' if I 'adn't a slipped 'em, an' cut."

"They! Who's they?" asked Dick.

"Pearly Bill an' Sheeny Ike," said Pete, now hardly able to stand from evident exhaustion.

It was then that the good "Samaritan" saw blood issuing from the bosom of the dirty rag which did duty for a shirt.

Without a moment's hesitation, and quite oblivious of the somewhat oppressive curiosity of the growing crowd, the policeman, catching up "Gentleman" in his arms, strode away rapidly in the direction of his own home

The kind-hearted chap wrote a few words on a leaf of his note-book.

Hazel Harlow's adventures grow more exciting every week.

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"Here, mother! Here's something for you to do! Put him to bed—little Dick's bed—give him something warm, and when he's tucked in and comfortable, call me."

An hour afterwards, Mrs. Jessup summoned her husband out of the kitchen into the sitting-room, where, in a corner, stood a little cot-bed, never removed since little Dick's death.

"Gentleman's" head lay, with his face a few shade cleaner, on the white pillow, his eyes fixed on the ceiling, and his breath coming in laboured pants.

"Hullo, old chap! what's the matter?" But Mrs. Jessup bid him be careful not to excite the child too much.

"'S that you, 'twenty-nine'?" asked Pete; "why, yer aint got yer 'elmet on, nor yer big coat! Put 'em on!" almost screamed the boy. "Yer'll want 'em, I tells yer! yer'll want 'em!"

"You'd best humour him," said the wife; "go and put 'em on, Dick."

"Well, 'Gentleman,' what is it?" said Dick, when, fully "helmeted" and "coated," he stood again by the bed.

"Now it's orl right! Look a' 'ere, 'twenty-nine,' d'yer want to be a hinspector? Well, do as I tells yer, an' yer'll be one—quick!"

Both husband and wife thought the boy was wandering, but they said nothing.

"Listen!" went on "Gentleman"—but for the gently restraining hand of his nurse he would have raised, or tried to raise himself, up in the bed—"them two I told yer on when yer grabbed me is a'-goin' ter 'do' that big 'ouse on Brixton 'Ill ter-night! You knows the 'ouse—the one as 'as all the red flowers in the winders an' in the gardin'."

"I know," said Dick, now strangely attentive. "Well, 'Gentleman.'"

"Well, they wanted a boy ter go up to the 'ouse an' poison the dorg—that big black 'un. They arstes me; I thought o' you, an' kids 'em I would. Then, like a mug, I drops summat, I couldn't help it, as made 'em wish they 'adn't said nothin'—an'—they bashes me, an' tuk me cloes away, an' locks me up in 'Sheeny's' place. But I done 'em—I done 'em, for I smashes the winder an' bolts—an'—an' tells yer—that's orl!"

White-faced before, he now became deathly—fainted away, in fact.

* * * * *

The rest is a matter of criminal history. When the two night-raiders made their attempt, Constable C 29, with one or two more to help him, received them, and made it impossible for them to disturb the peace of Her Majesty's lieges for some years to come.

* * * * *

The little cot-bed in the front room has a permanent tenant now, for both Dick (a full-blown sergeant for meritorious service rendered at the Brixton Hill burglary and his wife have adopted "Gentleman."

Mrs. Jessup's love for him is wonderful. He seems quite to have taken the place of her lost; though little Dick will, as must needs be, ever have the first place in her heart.

With regard to Dick, I should advise all those who value his good opinion not to speak contemptuously and cruelly of the London street boy, for "I believe," Dick will say, "you know nothing about it, and—I do, for I've had some, and—I likes it."

RALPH ENDERBY.

THE PROFESSOR'S STORY.

I AM a professor—no matter of which special ology. Let it suffice that my wife says I should always confine myself to my profession, as in any other line I am decidedly astray. I confess that I am slightly afflicted with absence of mind, and a proneness to neglect the affairs of everyday life, when I am immersed in deep study. I am, however, occasionally aroused into active interest in the actions of those about me by some of Nature's phenomena.

The whims of the human species, which cause them to do things entirely inconsistent with their general conduct, have always been a subject of scientific consideration with me. I will illustrate my meaning by the following tale, which so plainly proves that a woman is without logic.

Two years ago our coachman and man-of-all-work died, and we found ourselves just at harvest time without a person to conduct the affairs of the stable. I confess I was quite overwhelmed by the mischance, as I had just received an order to write a profound article on jurisprudence, for a scientific magazine, and to set aside the collateral ideas and become a practical groom was somewhat confusing.

My wife told me not to think about anything but my work, and they would manage to get on; but this I felt sure was not to be listened to. I bade the two girls seek assistance from some neighbours, and they did so, but help of the masculine gender was unobtainable. I became very uneasy over the strange situation. The second night after our man's demise I was unable to sleep, as thoughts of the hateful subject obtruded themselves on me. I determined, however, to meet the emergency boldly, and at breakfast I astonished my family by announcing that I would, presently, go to the barn to attend to the requisites of the cattle. I perceived an expression of amusement on the faces of my daughters, and I mentally determined that they thought me incapable of physical labour. I concluded to make them regret their temerity by being very practical. Unfortunately for my resolve, I received some letters while we were at table, among which was an official document from London. It contained valuable data, in the perusal of which I became much interested and am ashamed to say I entirely forgot all about the requirements of the poor animals in the stables.

I was so thoroughly engrossed with the interesting matter in hand, and the collateral ideas it involved,

Next week "Hazel Harlow in Newcastle."

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that I was oblivious to all surrounding objects, but was somewhat rudely awakened by being seized by the shoulders and shaken violently. Looking up I saw Kitty laughing at me.

Permit me to interpolate here that Kitty is my youngest daughter, and is prone to take more liberties with me than any of my other children. She is very, perhaps abnormally so, quick to learn, but she is very frolicsome, as all young animals should be. I have never had the heart to restrict Kitty in her innocent little foibles; in fact, my wife, in somewhat vulgar vernacular, says:

"You have spoiled Kitty to death."

Many women make these homely figures of speech convey added strength to a sentence. However, as I said, Kitty was laughing heartily, and shaking me as she talked.

"Dad, you are a cruel monster. Do you know it is ten o'clock? I thought that you were going to feed the cattle?"

"Why, my dear," I said with perturbation, "I am so sorry I forgot the poor things. I will make haste to attend to them." She put her little hand on my arm to detain me as I rose.

"Don't worry, you sweet old love; mother, Helen and I watered them and turned them out. You were so absorbed with your papers that we knew you would be liable to put the water in the feed-box, so we did not disturb you; but now you must rouse up and listen to me."

"My dear, I feel terribly self-reproached to think I permitted you and your mother to carry water and—and—feed, while I sat here reading," I began in a deprecatory manner.

"Don't waste time apologising, dad," Kitty interrupted, "we all know you can't help being moony. But listen, there is a man outside who wants to come and work for us; however, he is a stranger, and has no reference. He looks like a person who has seen better days. Mother does not know what to do about hiring him; do try, for once, to be practical, and come out and see him."

"By all means, my dear, by all means," I said, somewhat thrown off my equilibrium by this unexpected turn of affairs. "But first, would you be so kind as to tell me if you see anything of my—er— my eyeglasses?"

The girl's merry laughter floated through the room like a flood of music.

"Oh, you dear, delightful dad!" she said. "Your eyeglasses are on your nose."

Then holding my arm, as if she feared my escape, she led me out on the side veranda, where my wife and Helen stood conversing with a young man, whose personal appearance met with my approbation. He was a fine specimen of youthful vigour. Fully six feet two in height, he must have weighed about one hundred and sixty pounds. His face was smooth, and the features were straight and well shaped. Eyes as blue as an Italian sky looked fearlessly from beneath a cheap hat, which he lifted as I approached, showing his very straight blond hair. I noticed that his hands were brown, but did not look as if he had been reared to do great physical labour. His plain but clean clothing caused me to class him with a reputable farmer's son.

"You—er—I understand you would like to—er—become an—an—assistant of mine?" I asked kindly, not wishing to wound him by using the word servant. His eyes twinkled as he replied:

"I have applied to you for a position as general outdoor servant." I admired his brevity and humility.

"You—er—understand the care of horses, and—er—we have a Jersey cow," I explained. I realised that I was hopelessly out of my depth by the girls' silent laughter.

"I know how to care for animals," he asserted.

"He comes from London," remarked my wife. "I am sure he can do all we require, but he has no references."

"His face is reference enough, my dear," I said, with an assumption of importance I by no means felt.

"We will engage him, but—er—you—er—have not told me your name, young man."

"James McGruger," he stated, looking me straight in the eyes. I approved of that. It appeared honest.

"Well, James, I will show you the stables," I said. "And—er—we might as well go at once." I felt anxious to be back in the library with my papers.

"My dear," said my wife, "you have not said one word about his salary."

"We will arrange about that later," I asserted with dignity; "in the meanwhile, let us see if he can—er—affiliate with his new duties."

My wife gave me a look which told me she felt me incorrigible, and I saw my two girls were convulsed by my innovation from prescribed rules. Even the man had an expression of subdued mirth on his comely face. I thought it best to seem oblivious of this. I suppose I am a little odd at times. I, however, had not wished to humiliate him, as I saw at once he had not always been in this humble position.

I accompanied him to the barn and showed him about, explaining where things were kept as well as I could. I fear I should have come out of the affair in a somewhat ignominious manner if it had not been for Kitty; that girl's faculty for detail is remarkable. She even knew where the curry comb was kept. I saw James stare at her when she showed him where the harness oil was hidden. He evinced surprise, too, when the horses whinnied after her when she left the shed. As Kitty had been rather prone to arrogance, I told her I wished her to be very careful in her mode of speaking to James, as I was sure he had seen better days.

"If you should cause him to feel his menial position he might have recourse to alcoholic liquors, and thus become addicted to the use of stimulating beverages," I said.

"Oh, daddy, why can't you say he might get drunk?" laughingly inquired Kitty, with a happy girl's indifference to a cultivated choice of language. But despite her levity the girl had a very good heart, and she promised to be kind and considerate to our new man. Having attended to these trifles I retired to my study, and was soon immersed in serious work.

Nothing occurred to disturb our tranquility for two days, in fact my wife informed me that the horses had never been so well groomed and the cow gave more milk than usual, over which fact she seemed very jubilant. On the third day I was roused from my labour on a scientific essay on conchology by hearing screams out on the lawn. I hastened forth to ascertain the occasion of the

I found my wife and Helen on the veranda watching Kitty who, mounted on her pony, was being carried about the grounds in a most reckless manner. The bridle had broken, and the girl was utterly at the mercy of the savage little beast that I had always been disposed to distrust. While I was standing in a state of

Look out for when Hazel Harlow visits your town.

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great perturbation, wondering how I could assist my dear good child, James darted from the barn, and shouting to Kitty to keep her seat, tried to head off the pony, to prevent it from reaching the highway. In some way the ugly brute managed to get the man crowded against the gate-post, then it reared and struck at him with his forepaws. There was a moment of fearful suspense, then James had the creature by the nostrils, and by the exertion of marvellous strength, forced him to the ground. The beast kicked and plunged, and finally made an effort to lie down, at which James told Kitty to jump off, and he fairly held that animal up till she was out of the saddle, and at a safe distance. The man and beast then struggled for supremacy. After a fierce battle the man came off victor. He led the tamed creature up to the veranda and said quietly :

"You can ride him now, miss, he has had enough." Kitty stared at him for a moment.

"How are you, hurt?" she inquired, the first, as usual to perceive that something was wrong. My wife then remarked :

"You are very pale, James ; what is the matter?"

"It is nothing," he replied, almost sullenly, "I've just scratched my hand."

"Let me see," commanded Kitty. He hesitated. She went up to him and said softly : "You have just risked your life for me, let me at least sympathise with you."

It seemed to me a very pretty sight, they were both so young and innocent, but I saw my wife shake her head in disapprobation. I did not understand why. Women are so whimsical.

James looked full into Kitty's sympathising face for a moment, then he held out his left hand. A deep, jagged wound had been made on it by the broken bit. We all endeavoured to show our kindly gratitude. My wife tried to alleviate the pain by getting bandages to bind the wound ; Kitty and Helen brought lotion by the gallon. I ordered that all labour should be suspended for the day, and asked him if he would like Rollin's "Universal History" to read, as it was the only light book I could think of for the moment.

James got away from us all as soon as he could. When he walked off I noticed that his shoes were broken. I told my wife to give him the money for a new pair when he came for his noonday meal. She did so. After supper she sought me very much troubled. To my surprise and dismay, she said :

"My dear, James is at the door very much intoxicated, and he insists on speaking to you." I hurried outside. There stood James, on the lawn, holding himself up by a tree.

"Sir," he said, "I have come to tell you I must leave to-night."

"Why, James, what have we done to you."

"You have been too good to me."

"I do not understand. Has anyone hurt your feelings? If so it has been unintentionally, for we all like you."

"I ain't worth it," he declared ; "you see I am drunk now."

"We will overlook that, my man. We all have faults, and cannot expect perfection in others. You must not go."

"I must," he said. "Oh, you make me feel so mean. You are the best people I have ever seen in my life. Your young ladies speak to me as if I were a prince, and mother—she's been like a mother to me. I never knew there were such women in the world."

Here was a recommendation for us. I felt pleased.

"We like you, James, so stay with us," I said.

"I can't, sir, I can't tell you why, but when I hear them horses whinny after Miss Kitty, I feel choked with thinking. Some day, maybe, you'll know why."

This was all he would say, and he left us that night. About a month later Kitty dashed into my room with a paper.

"Oh, papa," she cried, "read that."

Kitty always insists on having her own way, so with a sigh I pushed aside my documents and took the daily from her hand. She pointed to a paragraph, and I read :

"A well known burglar, named James Lincoln, but known as 'Long James,' was captured last night, with the rest of his gang, as they were *en route* for Liverpool, with a quantity of stolen goods. The leader is a professional, has served three terms in prison, and is one of the hardest specimens of his craft. He has evidently been in a fierce fight lately, as he had a long, jagged wound on his left hand. He will probably be sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment."

"What an escape we have had," I exclaimed.

Kitty burst into tears, saying wildly :

"He was such a handsome fellow, too, and he saved my life."

Meeting my astonished gaze she flew out of the room like a whirlwind. I felt strangely uncomfortable. Kitty was the last person one would have expected to shed tears over a burglar. It seemed to me that we had been standing on the brink of a pit of trouble.

I never felt quite easy about Kitty again until I saw her married to a lawyer dignified enough to protect her from any flightiness. If she had remained single I would not have sought and obtained a pardon for James, as his return to active life again might have been of moment to—well, yes—it might have been of moment to my family, as there is no accounting for the whims of the female sex.

I have proved my hypothesis ; women are without logic. They are ruled altogether by emotions of the heart. Kitty proved it by her tears for a burglar.

Let the Editor hear what you think of "Adventures of an Actress."

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Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a Stereoscope to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, August 26th. Postcards only, please. The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded this week to Miss Sharpe, c.o. Mr. T. Sharpe, of High Street, Ibstock, Leicester, whose contribution is denoted by a star thus.*

"YOUR son, I hear, is becoming an excellent landscape painter." "He is." "Does he imitate Nature well?" "Imitate Nature! He beats Nature. He can put colours into a landscape that Nature never dreamed of."

*A LADY in the Lake District, having sent an order for a leg of mutton to the butcher who usually supplied the wants of her household, received the following note in reply: "Dear mem, I am sorry I have not killed myself this week, but you can have a leg off my brother."

ETHEL: "When angels come upon earth, mamma, are they in disguise?" Mamma: "Yes, dear; why do you ask?" Ethel: "Because I heard cousin Frank say to papa this morning that you were an angel, and papa said perhaps you were, but that you must be one in disguise."

MISTRESS (to late servant, now married, who has called): "And I hope you are very happy with your husband, Mary?" Mrs. O'Brien (late servant): "Oi am that, ma'am. Whoi, I've been married now close on six months, and in all that toime O'Brien's never been in gaol but twice!"

DURING a dense fog a large river steamer had to cast anchor. A traveller, anxious to go ahead, came to the man at the wheel and asked why they stopped. "Too much fog, can't see the river." "But you can see the stars overhead." "Yes," replied the sailor, "but until the boiler bursts we ain't going that way."

HE was a bad boy, and his father knew it. As soon as he came downstairs in the morning, the poor lad was greeted with a terrific box on the ears. "What's that for?" he cried, "Aw've done nowt wrong yet, have Aw?" "No," answered the father, "but tha soon will be doin', and that's one to be goin' on wi'!"

A YORKSHIRE farmer who had come to London for the first time, was walking along the Strand, filling his pipe, when a boy, selling wax-lights, came up to him with the usual "Lights, sir?" The farmer took a box from the boy, extracted a match, lit his pipe, and handed the box back to the astonished lad, passing on with the remark, "Lor! what a wonnerful place Lunnon is, to be sure!"

A GOOD story is told of the late Lord Chief Justice. One day, while travelling to Scotland, he entered the train at Rugby. There were only four passengers in the carriage, the rest of the seats being occupied by their luggage. Neither attempting to make room for him, he stood up, till at last one began to sulkily shift his luggage, when his lordship blandly remarked, "Pray don't trouble; I am getting out at Scotland."

WIGG: "There is one class of men that whisky never injures." Wagg: "And that is?" Wigg: "The men who leave it alone."

UGLY HUSBAND (snarling): "You married me for better or worse, didn't you?" Wife (hesitatingly): "Yes, but I supposed I would have some variety."

KINGLEY: "Wouldn't you like a copy of my poem on the girl who don't know how to cook?" Binzo: "Thanks, old man, but I've got the original at home."

IT is quite time to call a man absent-minded when, on coming down to breakfast, he kisses the sardine-box and begins operating on his wife's head with the tin-opener.

MISS PRIMROSE: "Don't you give your dog any exercise?" Miss Hollyhock (fondling a fat pug-dog): "Of course; I feed him with chocolates every few minutes just to make him wag his tail."

AUNT NANCY: "Think of the studyin' to be a doctor, eh? Don't you do it." Young Man: "Why not, aunty?" Aunt Nancy: "You can't git no practice till ye git married, and ye can't git married till ye git practice; that's why."

"GOOD morning, Mrs. McCluskey," remarked the neighbour, "you are quite well, I hope?" "Yes, quite well," responded Mrs. McC. "And strong?" "Yes, quite strong." "Then would you mind fetching those two wash-tubs back I lent you some time ago?"

A SMALL boy was detected by a farmer up his apple tree. When he had made the boy come down, the owner began to lecture him on his action. The boy answered him indignantly, "Now, you just count them apples over again before you insinuate that I stole any of them."

HOUSEHOLDER: "I am going to move to the suburbs next Monday, and I'd like you to do the job." Mover: "How many loads?" "I don't know. You moved me once, you may remember." "Yes; I needed three waggons then to get through, but that was some years ago. Have you moved since?" "Yes, indeed, half a dozen times." "Hum! I guess one waggon will carry all you have left."

IT was evening time in one of the London hospitals, and the nurse on duty was giving the little ones their last meal for the day. All, save one, were patiently waiting their turn to be served, the one in question being a little rosy-cheeked convalescent, who was calling lustily for her portion. "Aren't you just a little impatient, Dorothy?" inquired the kindly nurse, with just a tinge of correction in her tone. "No, I'm not!" retorted Dorothy, promptly. "I'm a little she patient!"

TWO Irish labouring bricklayers were working at some houses near Russell Square, and one of them was boasting of the steadiness with which he could carry a load to any height that might be required. The other contested the point, and the conversation ended in a bet that he could not carry him, in his bed, up a ladder to the top of the building. The experiment was made; Pat placed himself in the bed, and his comrade, after a great deal of care and exertion, succeeded in taking him up and bringing him down safely. The loser, without any reflection on the danger he had escaped, observed to the winner, "Well, to be sure, I've lost; but don't you remember about the third storey you made a slip?—I was then in hopes."

Hazel Harlow's adventures grow more exciting every week.

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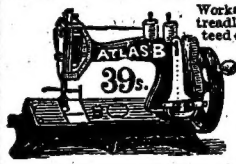

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE.

With the appearance of the first of the series, "Adventures of an Actress" have "caught on." So much I can tell by the letters I have received from numerous correspondents all over the country. This gives me the more pleasure because I am perfectly convinced that if you like the first story you will be more pleased than ever with those which follow.

The first was, to some extent, necessarily of an introductory kind, while the stories that come after plunge right into the middle of exciting incidents at once. The scene of beautiful Hazel Harlow's adventure in this number is laid at Scarborough. Next week's will find its venue at Newcastle. Readers in these particular towns will be especially interested. Therefore, once more I ask you to kindly recommend these tales to your friends.

Love, Courtship and Marriage.

(Replies to Correspondents.)

"Doleful Dumps" is eighteen, and very unhappy; do what she may, she never feels happy, and it makes her miserable to see people around her enjoying themselves. She has often tried to have a good time with her sisters, but never succeeds. They are all engaged, but young men seem to give her a wide berth.

No wonder, "Doleful Dumps!" I expect you make everyone miserable who comes near you! I should say your liver is out of order, and you should see a good doctor at once. Go out in the fresh air, walk, bicycle, ride, and take plenty of exercise. Moping never did a girl any good. It is ridiculous to be in the condition you describe at eighteen years of age.

"Army" writes to tell me that she was secretly married by special licence about four months ago. She wants to know if it is right for her to receive money from her husband, and for him to address her as his wife. He says he is coming back soon to take her home, and she is afraid her parents will refuse him. She wants to wear her ring, but does not like to, as she is afraid her fellow workers would suspect that she is married.

Yours is a difficult position, "Army," but I see no reason why you should not receive money from him. He is your husband, although being married secretly makes it difficult for you to realise it. Certainly, he has every right to address you as his wife. I do not see how your parents can refuse to let you go with him, as you certainly are old enough to know your own mind. Why don't you wear your rings on a ribbon round your neck? You will know you are wearing them all the time then, won't you? I hope your marriage will turn out very happily.

You tell me, "A. M. H.," that you are deeply in love with a young Irishman who seems very fond of you, though he has never told you so. You have known him for more than a year, and have been out with him on several occasions, but, although he has been very kind to you, he has never asked you to meet him again, or remarked on what you wear, neither has he ever given you a present. He is twenty-one, and you think it time he thought of a young girl, and you know for a fact that he is not going out with anyone else. There is a young girl who has just come up from the country that he is friendly with, but she does not care for him. You want to know if he is to be your husband, as you have taken to him such a lot more than you have to anyone else.

Well, "A. M. H.," I really do not see how I can tell any more than you can. I do not think, from what you tell me, that you ought to consider he cares for you any more than he does for anyone else, and you can only wait, and time will show whether he is to be anything more than a friend to you. I am glad you like the paper.

Take my advice, "Elinor," and don't rush into marriage without consideration. It is true, as you say, that the old proverb says, "Happy's the wooing that's not long a-doing," and many of those proverbs are very wise; but the circumstances of the present day are different, and it can hardly be considered wise to be "woo'd and married, and a'" in six weeks. If you were relations who had known each other for years, the case might be different; but considering that you did not know him two weeks ago, it is very rash. Postpone it, "Elinor," until you are sure that you know him well enough to be confident that he will prove a suitable partner.

"Trilby" wants to know what she can do to reduce the size of her feet. She is engaged to a young man, and ever since Christmas he has been lame in consequence of her crushing one of his toes while dancing. She adds a postscript to the effect that since the dance he does not seem so fond of her as he was before.

I am afraid you cannot reduce the size of your feet, "Trilby," but you can try and be more careful, can't you? I don't wonder at your lover feeling annoyed, though, of course, it was purely accidental. I hope he will soon be well again.

TO CONTRIBUTORS.

I am open to consider original stories of any length from 1,500 to 6,000 words. The character of stories required may be best ascertained by a careful reading of the contents of the paper. All MSS. are dealt with promptly, and every effort is made to return rejected stories which are accompanied by stamped addressed envelopes. At the same time, I cannot hold myself responsible for MSS. accidentally lost. Communications of this kind should be addressed The Editor, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C.

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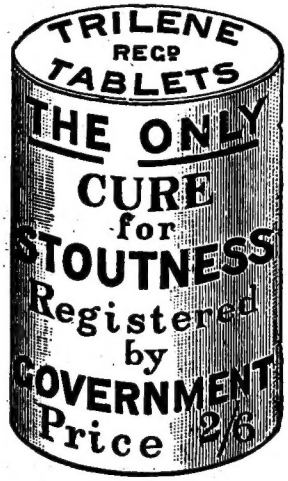

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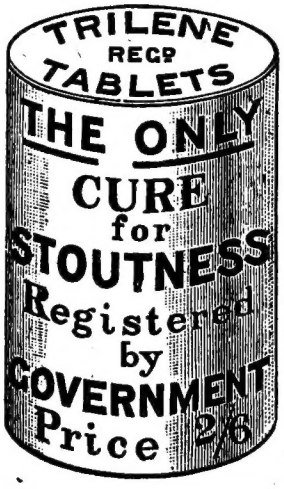

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.
Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.
"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORF", of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

Miss CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.
"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me.
"Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Risholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."
"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

Mrs. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mr. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 38 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

Mrs. DREW, of 1 Bellevue Gardens, The Nursery, Devizes, writes: "I took Tablets some years ago; they soon reduced me and I have not got stout since. Send me a box for my mother."

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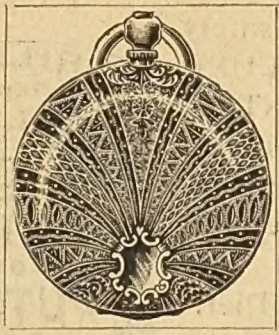

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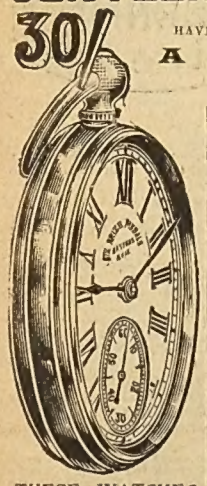

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